THE DISASTROUS LIFE OF Saiki K.

EXTRA STORY OF PSYCHICS

【小説】JUMP J BOOKS

ASOU SHUUICHI & HINATA SHOU

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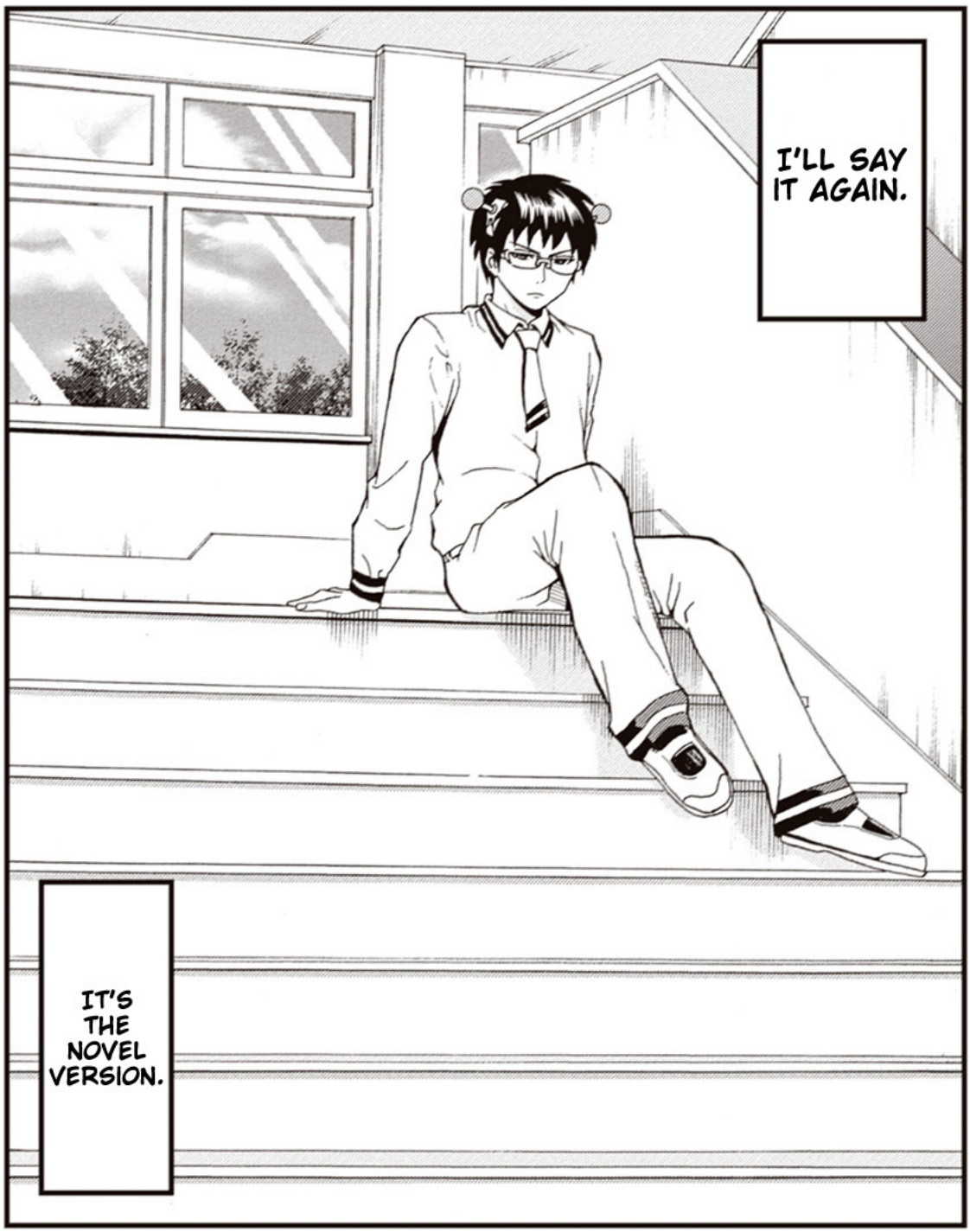


ASOU SHUUICHI & HINATA SHOU

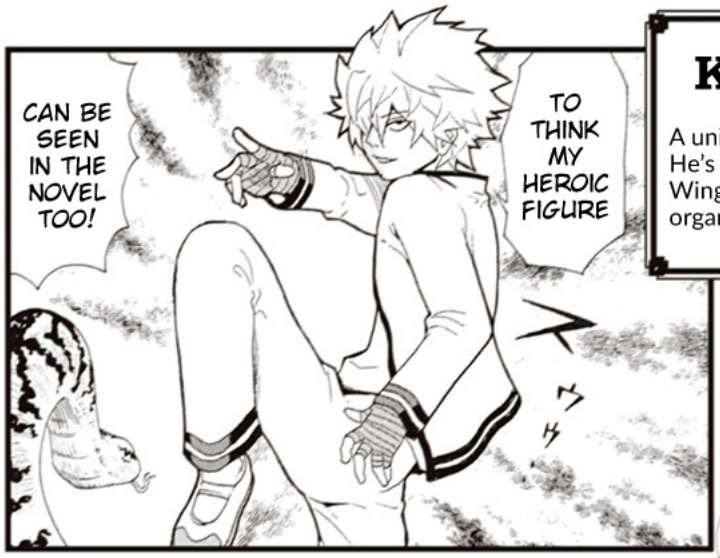
IF YOU'RE READING THE NOVEL I THINK YOU KNOW ALREADY, BUT JUST IN CASE...
A CHARA-CTER INTRO-DUCTION.
Saiki Kusuo
A cool high school student who controls various psychic powers like telepathy, psychokinesis, x-ray vision, precognition, teleportation, clairvoyance, and more.

STORY

His name is Saiki Kusuo, and he's a psychic. His extraordinary abilities, envied by everyone, are the root cause of his unhappiness. Saiki's motto has always been to keep his psychic powers to himself, to keep a low profile, and to keep a distance from others. However, his classmates, each with their own quirks, suddenly start getting closer! As such, unavoidable disasters strike Saiki...! This novel is an extra edition depicting the daily lives of Saiki and his eccentric classmates.

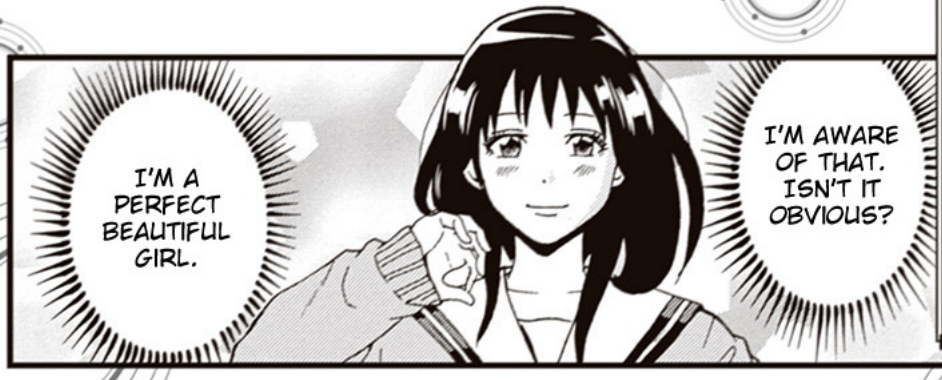
Nendou Riki

A mysterious idiot that calls Saiki his partner. His actions are impossible to read even for a psychic.



Kaidou Shun

A universally branded chuunibyou. He's the self-proclaimed Jet-Black Wings who fights against the secret organization "Dark Reunion"?!



Teru-Hashi Koko-mi

She's not only cute but also kind. Truly a perfect and beautiful girl.

Taka-hashi

Saiki's class-mate.

Hairo Kineshi

The class representative. He's a hot-blooded and lively boy.

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Afterword

★ This work is a work of fiction. It is not related to any real person, group, or incident.

Chapter 1 Try to guess the ESP cards!

My name is Saiki Kusuo. I'm an esper.

Sorry if it's too sudden but let me guess what you're thinking right now.

"Woah! What's this?! I thought I had bought a manga, but this is full of words!"

How was it? Did I guess correctly?

No, there's yet another voice that's saying something different… Let's take a look….

"I'm a big fan of the manga so of course I'm going to buy a novelization! Even if it's just a mediocre work…"

Okay. I see. Thank you. Why don't you come to the back of the gym later? Do you want to try flying? I'm in the middle of a campaign to get its perfectly clean walls full of splats.

But leaving the jokes aside, what do you think about supernatural powers?

Like being able to communicate and read other people's minds without saying a single word via telepathy.

Or being able to move or destroy physical objects with just the power of the mind via psychokinesis.

Or being able to see through flipped cards or walls.

Or being able to predict the future and events that haven't happened yet.

Or being able to teleport people or things to a completely different thing instantaneously.

Or being able to monitor things that are happening far away from you.

And so on. These are powers that normal people don't have. You can make the impossible possible and bend the laws of physics. I'm sure you'd like to have those powers as well, right?

Let me be the first one to tell you you're wrong, as an esper myself.

It's better to not have any psychic powers at all.

You think it's convenient? Not at all. You don't know how much I've suffered because of my special powers that no one else has. A life where you can do any ordinary thing you'd like with your psychic powers is not as good as it sounds.

For example, I mentioned a lot of examples of what I can do earlier but let me focus on one in particular: telepathy.

Telepathy allows you to hear other people's inner voices. Thanks to this power, I'm constantly hearing other people's inner voices 24/7. You could say it's like having a small radio tuned to every station at the same time in the back of your ears. Not to mention this radio has an endless supply of energy, and I can't consciously cut it off.

That's why even when I'm walking to school all by myself down a lonely road, I can still hear countless voices from other people reverberating inside my head.

I can hear the inner voice of a serious-looking office worker that passed by.

(I don't want to go to work… If I ever win the lottery, I'm going to smack that damned boss's bald head…)

And I can hear the voice of the high school girl that just drove by on her bicycle.

(I'm really scared of the future… Can't I just win the lottery or something?)

Not to mention I can even hear the inner voices of people inside their homes around me.

(Ugh… my novels aren't selling anymore. If I had followed my plans, I probably would've won the lottery by now…)

I see, there's a broke writer living in that home.

Wait a second, why are they all thinking about the lottery?! Don't force me to listen to your economically depressing inner rants this early in the morning.

In any case, that's how I can hear voices that I don't want to with the power of telepathy. All humans have two sides to them. No one would expect the serious-looking office worker to be thinking about winning the lottery, climbing on top of his desk while shouting to the sky and then coming down to slam his bald boss on the head. Although I don't find it particularly

surprising, considering I get a direct input from his head. Anyone else wouldn't take longer than three seconds to start losing their own faith in humanity.

However, I occasionally get to think about how complex human thinking is thanks to that power. Someone may be smiling on the outside, but exploding with rage on the inside, and couples that look like two lovebirds on the outside may in fact be coldly calculating their next step against each other, or someone who is happily dancing may be grieving on the inside. Humans are complex.

Just as complex as the scene unfolding in front of me: a man cosplaying as a hero straight out of an RPG is getting questioned by two police officers. I don't think anyone would expect to find a suspicious person like that during their morning commute to school, but it definitely was a surprise even to me as an esper.

The man in the cosplay was trying to explain something to the officers while almost breaking out crying.

"N-No, that's not true… this is just a penalty game. They forced me to dress like this, and… if I didn't wear this, I'd never be allowed to ride on the Seibu Ikebukuro line ever again…"

The man in the cosplay kept desperately explaining in a messy manner.

So he was just messing around with his friends because of a penalty game, huh?

I was sure that's what the officers would be thinking. And I can check if I'm right with my powers.

However…

(Ha ha ha… policemen sure are simple. I can just apologize and get away with anything…)

This is what's really going on inside the cosplay guy's head, even though he's bowing profusely in front of them. I can tell right away.

By the way, sorry if this seems out of nowhere, but I'm going to be using (parentheses) to represent people's inner voices. People speaking like usual will be represented by normal "quotation marks."

What do you think? All people have a public and private side. I'm sure you could tell the difference just from this simple scene. Good grief… I'm already used to it, but this goes on 24/7 nonstop. Wouldn't you hate that?

But I'm sure you're still thinking that it would be more convenient to have psychic powers anyway, right? What? You're actually thinking that it would be better if you didn't have any psychic powers? Even your inner voice reaches me like this. As I was saying, having psychic powers is not that impressive at all.

When it comes to school, I'm neither above nor below average. Not standing out means not being late, not being forgetful, not having terrible grades, not being awful at sports, and so on. I try my best to be as average as possible; a student that doesn't leave a lasting impression.

I'm the kind of classmate you'd forget the very next day after graduation. The kind of guy that, when mentioned, you can't exactly remember but there is a vague notion that there was a guy like that back in school.

That's fine by me, of course. That's exactly the kind of interaction that I want to have, since it would be particularly troublesome if people found out that I'm an esper. As long as I can live a quiet and peaceful life, and I can eat my favorite coffee jelly, I'm happy.

That's why I live my life trying to keep a reasonable distance from all my classmates. However, that's not as simple as simply going to sleep during the break, or eating lunch on the toilet. I have to make a conscious effort to protect my average everyday life. I have to be constantly vigilant of my interactions with my classmates. I have to try my best to be as bland as possible, and make my presence as noticeable as air. It's because I want to avoid standing out, that I can't overlook absolutely anything.

That's right, this is important. Someone who doesn't stand out can't afford to be a net negative presence either, and that's harder than you'd think. You could end up getting your priorities backwards and standing out for not standing out whatsoever.

Making your presence like air… I have to make an exhausting effort to keep that position.

However, maybe because of my efforts, or maybe because of some slight mind control on my part, I've managed to attain the excellent position of not standing out while at least making my presence noticed enough. You can't see the air in front of you. And hardly any people are constantly aware of it going in and out of their lungs as they breathe. However, if one day air completely disappeared from the face of Earth, that would be bad, right? Well, I would be fine, though.

Today I entered the classroom and headed towards my seat immediately. No one said hello to me on my way there. I went unnoticed just like air.

I put my bag down, take out a textbook and a notebook, and start skimming over a novel I brought with me. The classroom's atmosphere before homeroom consists, just like usual, of my classmates gathering in the same groups of two or three people while discussing and getting excited over a game they were playing, or a TV show they watched last night. No one notices me and no one thinks about me. That's good. I can enjoy my reading in silence, just like air, until the teacher gets here. Novels are fun. My psychic powers don't work on fictional characters. I take out the bookmark to go to the next page and—

"Oh? Partner! Let's go and eat ramen!"

So he just got here…

I drop my novel as the voice calling out to me from behind my back slightly startles me. The book falls closed. I still have the bookmark in my hand. Great, now I can't tell how far I've read…

I lean in to pick up my book, but I don't turn around. I can tell who's standing behind me just by his low-pitched voice. The one who just called out to me is my tall, muscular and scary looking classmate, Nendou Riki.

Nendou is, as you'd expect, badmouthed and clueless. My classmates all fear his cleft chinned existence and try to keep their distance from him. However, for some reason he's drawn towards my air-like presence.

I've met people like that before.

Some of my classmates in the past would end up feeling sympathy towards my invisible existence and would try to get close to me. They're kind of annoying, but as long as you don't play along with them, they'll eventually go away on their own.

However, Nendou is different.

For some reason he's particularly interested in me, so him and his cleft chin are constantly following me around saying useless things like "Eh?," "Partner" or "Ramen." He starts speaking or even laughing all by himself even if I ignore him. He's truly the king of cluelessness. That's the kind of person Nendou Riki is.

Good grief… He's so bad at it he probably couldn't tell the contextual differences between a high school and space.

However, I could handle it if that was all, but I have several other problems.

I flip through the pages of my book trying to find my previous page, as I let out a sigh.

Normally something like someone calling out to me from behind my back and startling me to the point where I drop the book I'm reading wouldn't happen, because of my powers.

I can predict the future and I have telepathy, after all. I can hear not only my classmates' inner voices, but the voices from all students in school.

That's why I should be able to tell when someone is thinking about me, and I should be able to predict if someone is going to call out to me from behind my back before it happens.

However, Nendou's voice is the only one I can't hear whatsoever.

This surprised me. I even wondered if I had lost my powers, though that wasn't true.

Unexpectedly, this man—Nendou Riki—fundamentally doesn't think about anything.

I can normally read the minds of dogs, cats and other domestic animals. I've even read the minds of gorillas, otters and all other sorts of animals. Although their thoughts aren't as complex as humans,' I can still read their

minds. As long as they're thinking, I can read their minds. Perhaps creatures like bugs would be impossible for me.

Eventually when thoughts get as simple as bugs' I can no longer pick up what they're thinking. Perhaps it's because they are creatures so far removed from humans to begin with. I'm not even sure bugs are capable of thinking in the first place.

Which means that to me, Nendou is on the level of a bug. Maybe he's just that far removed from me as a creature. The only thing I know for certain about Nendou, is that he's an idiot who leads his everyday life without thinking about anything.

That would mean that he doesn't have a public and a private face like most people. Nothing is scarier than a completely clueless person who manages to be as unpredictable as a bug. In short, if Nendou decided to use a secret martial arts technique to cut my head off right now, I would have absolutely no means to dodge it.

I just keep reading my book while completely ignoring Nendou, as he keeps talking on and on about something.

"So that's why I'm asking you, partner. Are you free today? Eh? In that case, let's go eat some ramen!"

The first period hasn't even start yet…

And so, I always end up wondering every time I see him whether this man's only known words are "Eh?," "Partner" and "Ramen."

"You know? The first shop I went to wasn't good, but it wasn't bad either. But the taste still always makes me kinda want to eat for some reason, you know?"

I wonder why Nendou keeps speaking to me even though I don't say anything to him. Also, I can't figure out whether that was his first time going, or whether he's a regular.

"You know? So let's go there after school today."

Ah he was talking about later today… Good grief, his conversations are always incoherent. Why is he so happily speaking about something so useless this early in the morning? He sure is a guy that can keep going on and on and on… It would be better if he just drank some mirin instead and stayed quiet for a while.

(TL Note: "Mirin" is a rice wine used primarily in cooking, and is not typically consumed as a beverage due to its strong sweetness and low alcohol content.)

As I was pondering about that, I noticed someone gazing straight at me.

"Hm… Saiki… I would've never expected to see you again."

As Nendou keeps blabbering on, another voice butts in. That's right, I was so focused on Nendou that I completely forgot about this guy. It's my classmate who clearly spends far too much time styling his own hair to accompany his baby face, Kaidou Shun. He keeps speaking as he dramatically covers his face with one of his hands adorned with wristbands.

"Oh, that's right. That battle might have felt like an eternity to me, but to you who never changed timelines, it must have felt like just one night…"

Kaidou slightly laughs at himself.

"Good morning… I think that's what people in this timeline say, right…?"

Kaidou, please have some self-respect.

"Great weather, huh? …I'll try saying this phrase now… Although these fleeting moments of peace keep spilling out through my own fingers…"

Kaidou, if I could just try saying this phrase to you now, then let me tell you that I don't exist in that other timeline. Come back to reality already. You're a second-year student already.

That's mostly how the conversation with Kaidou is going. Although more than a conversation, I guess you could call it a monologue since I've been staying quiet all this time. Could any of you understand anything he said?

That's right… that was just a regular greeting.

This guy… Kaidou Shun is a different type of careless airhead known by the entire class. So perhaps out of sympathy or something he tends to gravitate towards me and talk to me about all sorts of incomprehensible stuff. Lines like "battle" or "timeline" are born out of his delusions. It's something like the "this is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to people, organizations or incidents is mere coincidence" disclaimer. Basically, he's an annoying person.

And just like Nendou, Kaidou keeps being persistent. For some reason he became interested in me and started talking like a chuunibyou about things like “secret organizations” or “evil airs around town,” asking if I hadn’t noticed as well. No matter how much I ignore him, he keeps pressing on and talking about whatever’s on his mind. He’s truly the king of all chuunibyou’s. That’s the kind of person Kaidou Shun is.

(TL Note: A “chuunibyou,” also known as someone with “middle school syndrome,” is someone with grandiose delusions, who desperately wants to stand out and has convinced themselves that they have hidden knowledge or secret powers.)

Good grief… The school’s most clueless idiot and the school’s king of all chuunibyou’s. I can’t figure out which one’s worse. And I get the feeling that they’ve been getting even worse lately, but maybe that’s just my imagination.

Even as class is about to start, the two stay around my desk, and talk about anything.

Nendou to my right, Kaidou to my left. I remain silent.

Give me a break. Now I’m trapped between the two most infamous kings in school. It’s like some nightmare game of chess. No, maybe it’s more like Othello. In that case, maybe I’m about to be picked up and taken to space.

However, unlike Nendou, I can read Kaidou’s mind without any problems. In fact, the only human on Earth whose mind I can’t read right now is Nendou.

In any case, Kaidou—perhaps unconsciously—starts rubbing his left eye. I look at him, as he starts talking:

“Ugh, what?! Don’t start going on a rampage this early in the morning… Obey my orders. ‘Jet-Black Wings!’ Seal yourself, evil eye Catoblepas!”

He holds down his eyelid and says the binding spell with a dramatic tone. He then notices me looking right at him and starts painfully laughing in an exaggerated voice.

“Huh? …Sa-Saiki, you shouldn’t stare so much. My cursed left eye, Catoblepas went on a rampage last night… Catoblepas is an evil magical technique. Anyone who sees it is going to die…!”

And he keeps talking about that. Even if what you're saying were true, I think I would judge your own sanity for walking out like that and even coming to a school where many people gather all calm and collected. I think I would have to ask what's wrong with you. I almost feel like telling him that he should wear an eyepatch in that case, but unfortunately, I get the feeling that Kaidou would consider that a reward.

As I keep thinking that, I can also hear Kaidou's thoughts. By the way, right now, as Kaidou was saying that cheesy line, this is what he was thinking:

"Huh? …Sa-Saiki you shouldn't stare so much." *(Ouch! There's something in my left eye. What is it? An eyelash? Well, I guess the tears will take it out eventually… Maybe I should just go to the toilet and take it out in front of the mirror…)*

I told you he was an annoying guy.

Every time I listen to Kaidou's true self like this, all I can think is that maybe I could befriend him a little more if he were more honest.

And every time I listen to his regular spiel, all I can think is that he gets possessed far too often. What happened to yesterday's Right Arm Darkness Dragon? I haven't heard from him at all since yesterday, is he doing alright? I'm extremely curious about that.

But completely disregarding my concerns, Kaidou started getting agitated as he kept rambling.

"Ugh… Sariel, the angel of death, cast Catoblepas as a means to control me for taking the organization down. Damn you, Sariel! That was an incident previous to my earned title of the 'Jet-Black Wings…' I fought against Skryde Saver, the strongest member of the organization known as the Ten Black Letters that was trying to throw the world into darkness by means that humanity nowadays cannot comprehend. I fought day and night against a power far stronger than you can imagine, and in the end his final prophecy as he died turned into reality. In the end that helped me catch up with Sariel who I had banished to the moon, materializing myself into this body in the very instant the great threat against humanity was defeated. I borrowed the power of my remaining companions on Earth, and finally won my battle against Sariel. However, it seems like I wasn't good enough to erase his bottomless ambition… And the ones who made that ambition their own were… '*them!'* You know them very well, Saiki. The ones who use the snake as their symbol; the ones trying to carry out their 'Human Selection Program'; the most evil secret organization: 'The Dark Reunion!'"

I don't know them at all.

Even if you claim I'm in any way close to them, and bring up these evil secret organizations, the Dark Reunion is only "secret" and an "organization" because it exists inside your head, right? There's no way that I'd know anything about something like that. More importantly, you should look in a mirror. Didn't your fake eyelashes come off already?

Good grief, he sure speaks a lot for such a poor actor. Instead of staying there talking about all sorts of nonsense, it would be better if he drank some magic mirin and purified himself or something.

"They've broken past the taboos of science and magic, and revived Sariel from his ashes as a vessel to make Catoblepas an advanced angel android… And now I must once again—"

You're still going?! Just how persistent is that Sariel guy? Is he a film character?

"Oh? Catoblepas…? I remember it from my elementary school days!"

Nendou, what are you doing?!

Feeling the urge to talk about even more nonsense, Nendou decides to cut into Kaidou's speech. I feel like retiring from school altogether.

"Heh, don't tell me a lowly man like you knows about Catoblepas!"

Answers Kaidou trying to contain his face of excitement. Nendou answers proudly as he takes his index finger and sticks it up his nose.

"Sure, I think it was… that thing you used to draw good circles."

Nendou takes his thumb and index finger and starts turning them around in an incomprehensible gesture.

"Ah, ah… that's right. W-With magic, like that…" *(What the hell is this guy talking about?!)* Kaidou answers while feeling completely confused.

"Didn't you use to open up holes on your desk with it and then play golf with pieces of erasers? Huh partner?"

Okay, that's a compass. You could only remember the "pass" sound at the end.

(A magic device? To open holes on a desk? Golf with an eraser? I don't understand what this guy is talking about in the slightest… What?! Don't tell me that he's being attacked by an esper from the organization right now… Damn you! How dare you get an innocent bystander involved!)

Nendou, Kaidou seems to be truly concerned for you. What are you going to do about it?

"I-In any case, Saiki. I have the curse of Medusa on this eye right here. Ha ha ha, you better not carelessly look at it if you don't want to die."

What about Catoblepas? Nendou, it's your fault that Kaidou got so confused, he mistook his imaginary fantasy for another. He just started talking about the imaginary plot he was so desperately thinking about last night.

Kaidou realizes his own mistake and starts panicking.

"Ah, no. M-My left eye is Catoblepas and… that's right, my right eye has the curse of Medusa! Ha, ha…"

Nendou, it's your fault now that both of Kaidou's eyes are cursed, and he'll have to keep them closed. Now he won't be able to see anything. What are you going to do about it?

Feeling a little dizzy, I take my chilly hands to my forehead. The cold feeling of my fingers is rather pleasant. I wonder why Nendou and Kaidou keep talking to me like this, even though I never say anything to them. They don't seem to mind, though.

"Blah blah blah ramen, partner!"

Don't say it like that's the store's name.

"Blah blah blah Dark Reunion Saiki."

Stop putting weird prefixes to my name.

Both of them keep going on and on as they surround me. It's still early in the morning and I'm tired already.

With Nendou looking so huge and Kaidou so tiny, the two of them lined up like that almost look like a comedy duo. However, instead of being a funny duo, they're the type that don't say anything funny whatsoever…

“Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah”

I’m seriously thinking of transferring to another school.

And just as I’m starting to fantasize about getting to live an ideal, quiet life…

“Woah?! That’s amazing! He did it!”

A loud voice came from outside the classroom. All the eyes inside the classroom looked straight in its direction.

“Eh? Did the festival come to town?”

“Is it a spy from the organization…?”

Nendou lifted his face; Kaidou turned around.

Right outside the classroom, a small crowd of people is starting to form. In the middle of the crowd is Takahashi, who usually doesn’t stand out much from the rest.

Right now, though, Takahashi is completely surrounded by other classmates who are all cheering, which is particularly unusual for him. It wouldn’t be quite as surprising if he were surrounded by thugs trying to take some of his money, however this is a completely unexpected situation. I think I might be interested in Takahashi’s existence for the very first time since I was born.

I see Takahashi’s cheeky grin through a gap in the crowd. Takahashi points at a classmate from the crowd standing in front of him and asks him to pick one card from the five he has on the desk.

The cards on his desk are probably self-made out of cardboard. They’re all lined up so they can be clearly seen by the audience. The student picks up one without looking at the other side, and hides it in his hands.

“Ready? I’m facing the other side, so all of you have to remember the mark written on the card.”

The student nods, and while making sure Takahashi is still facing the other side, shows his friends the mark on the card.

“Did you guys get it?”

Takahashi turns around, closes his eyes and frowns his brow as if he were deep in thought.

And then…

“The mark written on that card is… a circle!”

“A-Amazing! He did it again!”

A loud cheer comes from the surrounding crowd again. However, at the same time…

Ah, so it was just magic.

I lost all my interest in Takahashi in an instant.

“Eh? What’s that?! A deck?”

Nendou gives a puzzled look at the cards, and Kaidou replies:

“Those are ESP cards! They were developed by the Organization in order to carry out their underground experiments. They come in groups of five. I can’t believe a guy like him has them…!”

You sure are informed, Kaidou. That’s right. That’s not a regular deck, but ESP cards. It sounds incredibly middle school-ish because it was Kaidou who explained it, but they do in fact exist.

ESP cards were designed in groups of five to carry out supernatural power experiments.

The cards each have a different symbol written on them: Circle, Cross, Waves, Square and Star. They’re used in experiments in the field of Parapsychology, though some people use them to prove they have some sort of sight superpower.

However, I can only look at Takahashi’s triumphant look with disappointment. Because of course…

“That’s amazing Takahashi! How do you get it right?! Show us the trick!”

As my classmates start to get excited, Takahashi gives them a cheeky look.

“Come on, this isn’t just any magic! I told you to keep in mind the sign in the card, right? What I did was simply peek into your heads and see the

image you had in mind at the moment. There's no trick or anything like that!"

What a coincidence, Takahashi. I can peek into your mind as well.

In fact, I've been listening to you this whole time.

"I'm really sorry, guys. Since this isn't any magic, I can't just show you the trick or anything like that, since it doesn't even exist!" *(How do you like some good old-fashioned mentalism?! With this I'll surely become popular among the class! All the girls are sure to fall for me, too! Hah, and to think that all I had to do was remember some very small dents in each card to be able to tell them apart every time!)*

"For real?! Are you really an esper?!"

What a coincidence, Takahashi. Turns out I'm an esper as well.

I keep thinking as I look at my classmates getting more and more excited.

I'm sure some of you may have already noticed, but I'll tell you something. I have absolutely no interest in the practice known as "magic." It's not that I have any particular opinion about pro magicians or even hobbyists or magic fans. It's just that as an esper, my telepathy, clairvoyance, teleportation and flying abilities all mean that I will almost certainly figure out the tricks with ease. That's why magic, to me, is not amusing in the slightest. I find it redundant, obvious, and especially annoying when I'm asked to participate and engage in a magic trick.

Not to mention that with my psychic powers, not only would I be able to see the back of every of those cards Takahashi is playing with, but I could even see the color of his organs if I wanted to. I can even see behind the cover of a "My Heroic Academy" volume without ever turning the page.

To someone like me, the kind of magic tricks that Takahashi is doing, is almost like trying to make a see-through box seem like a surprise box. There's no mystery. I'm sure you can understand why I feel like that, though.

"A-Amazing! He got the card right when he turned it around! He's an esper…!"

Nendou is completely fooled by him. I'm sure you're also the type to buy famous paintings from a sketchy place in front of the train station. Good

grief, I guess from a normal point of view, magic could also be considered a talent after all…

“Hey, partner, let’s go and take a closer look.”

Go by yourself.

I have no intention to get involved in Nendou’s or Takahashi’s antics. I just want to live peacefully.

However…

“Hmph, there’s no need for that.”

Kaidou is now looking at us with an even more smug face than Takahashi’s while holding some ESP cards of his own.

Why do you have that?

“I’m also one of ‘the chosen ones,’ after all.”

Kaidou spread the ESP cards in front of us, as if he were playing a game of Old Maid. But unlike Takahashi’s that are self-made on cardboard, his are properly printed. Maybe they sell them in magic shops or something.

Why does he regularly have such an insane item with him?

I see. The reason he knew about them was because he actually bought them. It does make sense, Kaidou. You look like the type that would enjoy experiments like that.

“It’s kind of a waste having to show just the two of you the true extent of my powers.”

Apparently Kaidou is also starved for onlookers. But more importantly, do you really have to do it on my desk?

“Eh? That’s amazing! These are much cooler than his!”

Nendou shouts that without even thinking about it. He has no ill intent, but he also doesn’t have even a little delicacy.

Not to mention that thanks to his stupidly loud voice, now a crowd of our classmates has gathered around my desk.

“Woah! What’s this?! That’s amazing!”

“Are these yours, Kaidou? That’s awesome!”

“Huh? These are properly printed and everything! How much were they?”

The classmates that were previously gathering around Takahashi and everyone else came to my desk. Takahashi could only stand completely speechless.

“Good grief, it sure is crowded now. I can’t handle crowds all that well.”

What a coincidence, Kaidou. I hate crowds as well.

However, he’s just saying that. Kaidou looks pretty happy to be surrounded by our classmates. He’s smiling and saying “Well, it can’t be helped” to himself. His words and his expression don’t match one bit.

This is truly troublesome. I can’t read my book quietly like this.

“Alright then. It’s a shame having to show it to just plain humans, but let me show you the true extent of my powers!”

You said that same thing earlier. Apparently, you’re going to repeat it as many times as necessary.

My classmates start getting excited and cheering him on. Kaidou finally begins his magic trick.

He puts five cards on top of my desk. Of course, I already know what’s behind those cards. However, there’s no way to tell the cards apart. What do you have in mind, Kaidou?

According to his inner thoughts:

(Wh-What do I do…? They’re all extremely excited… Only thing I can do is try to guess…)

You’re going to guess?!

Well, the kind of trick Takahashi was using to guess the cards is basically on elementary school kid level. Trying to honestly guess these ESP cards that haven’t been tampered with is the right thing to do.

Kaidou is now waving his hands mysteriously on top of the cards. My classmates are holding their breath. Silence falls upon the classroom.

“Ha ha ha! I can read the past thoughts and experiences that have been left inside these cards. Alright then, Gaia, whisper into my ears! My eyes can see everything past and future!”

First you said your power relied on your hands, then your ears and then your eyes. Choose one.

“Let’s go. The mark written on this card is… the star!”

Kaidou draws the card while shouting.

The mark written on it was the star. My classmates all raise their voices in excitement.

“That’s amazing, Kaidou! You really did it!”

“Hah! Of course I’d do something that simple!” says Kaidou while looking the other way. But inside his mind he’s thinking:

(I-I did it…! I got it right! I never thought it would work… That’s good. I’ve been training day after day. Maybe there’s a dormant power inside me after all…)

It was just coincidence.

That’s right, ESP cards are only five. You had a 1/5 chance of getting it right. That’s why you could realistically get it right once or twice by coincidence.

However, Kaidou, you’re pretty lucky. I was sure that you’d embarrass yourself and skip school tomorrow.

I keep thinking that when suddenly:

“Eh? Let *me* give it a try then!”

Now Nendou wants to choose one card from the four remaining on the table, apparently. Good grief, he doesn’t understand anything about ESP cards.

If you try guessing them one after the other, then they lose their purpose. What’s amazing is guessing them all at the same time. Removing one after

the other means that the likelihood of getting them right will increase, and all you'd be doing is figuring out which one's missing.

However, my classmates are still completely glued to the cards.

"Dun! I'm an esper too!"

He starts hyping himself up in a voice that can only remind me of a man tripping and falling, and looks carefully at the four remaining cards. The entire classroom falls deep into an expectant atmosphere. I'm telling you all that this is wrong. That's not how it works at all.

"The last one was the star… so according to the probabilities, next should be… the circle!"

Says Nendou, without quite understanding the theory behind it.

"Alright, this is it!"

The card he had been hyping up was indeed the "circle." My classmates once again erupt into cheering. You really don't care about anything as long as they're lucky, huh? Why?

"You got lucky, Nendou. As expected of my—"

"Whoopee, I did it, partner!"

Nendou, Kaidou was about to say something and you interrupted him.

Nendou starts cheering along with our other classmates.

"I'm an esper! Eh? I'm an esper! Eh?"

They keep getting excited as he repeats the same thing. It's really unpleasant to watch. Why don't you use your powers and teleport yourselves to space?

There are only three cards remaining: The waves, the square, and…

I look closely at the cards on the desk. I'm not just looking at them, though. I can see through them. As an esper, I can't just choose my cards based on instinct. Of course, that also means I can't even play any card games. Not only would I see my opponent's cards, but I would also read their mind.

I can hear a voice coming from behind me.

“What’s going on? Seems like you’re doing something fun.”

The one saying that is our class rep that I can’t see clearly because of the bright light around him, Hairo Kineshi. And yet another annoying guy showed up because of this crowd…

Hairo is very popular in our class. Compared to my invisible existence, he’s a completely different kind of person. Now he seems interested in the ESP cards.

“These are some cards that the organization developed to feed off of supernatural energy. I’m in the middle of divining which card is which.”

“Oh, why don’t you do it too? It’s fun!”

Nendou and Kaidou invite Hairo.

“I see. I have to guess between a cross, waves and a square.”

Hairo confirms that explanation with one classmate nearby, and then starts talking to me for some reason.

“You see Saiki, you need to choose with motivation! Look! Look! And then finally make a choice! As long as you’re passionate about it, you can conquer anything!”

Hairo clenches his fists tight and starts talking to the cards.

“I can see you! Come! Come to me! Hey! Hey! I can do it! I can see them! I’ve got it! I’ve got this! Hey! What’s wrong?! Come to me already! What’s wrong?!”

What’s wrong with you? Just make a choice already.

“Don’t give up! Come on! Come to me, waves! You’re not that big of a deal after all!!”

Hairo now bites hard, and takes one card with his hand trembling in excitement.

And then:

“Woah! I got the waves!”

His body suddenly got completely drenched in sweat almost as if he had just poured a bucket of cold water on himself. Good job, Hairo. You managed to get the waves symbol with pure willpower.

“As expected of Hairo! That’s amazing!”

“Of course Hairo would get it right!”

My classmates keep talking gathered around my desk. Though it made sense, since there were only three cards left. It’s easier when you have a 1/3 chance of getting it right.

My classmates cheer loudly again, still surrounding my desk. I’m starting to get annoyed. I won’t be able to read anything at this rate. I just wanted to be alone for a while.

“Waves! Why are you so wavy?! Why?! You should try living more directly! Woaaaah! Whyyyy?!”

Hairo starts getting particularly excited as he shouts into the card he drew. Hairo, if those waves started living “more directly” they’d turn into rods.

As I keep thinking that, Nendou places his hand on my shoulder.

“It’s your turn, partner.”

He says with a smile on his face. There are only two cards left.

All the gazes from my classmates suddenly turn to me following Nendou’s words. Why am I getting put in the spotlight?

Good grief. I’m sorry, but I have no intentions to keep riling you guys up. I don’t want to stand out. If I got this right, they’d only get even more excited.

I have no choice. I’ll have to get it wrong on—

“We’re counting on you, Saiki! I’m sure you can do it!”

Kaidou says while trying to strike a cool pose.

“Saiki-kun, do your best! I’m sure you can do it! You’ll get it right for sure! Don’t give up!”

Hairo starts shouting, and all my classmates follow him along.

“Saiki! Do it!”

“You’re the last one before we get them all right!”

Their cheering turns into chanting my name.

“Saiki! Saiki! Saiki!”

It feels like I can’t just get it wrong at this point.

This is bad. Getting it wrong could become an obstacle in living a peaceful school life from now on. Instead of getting treated like an invisible existence, I’d become just a lame existence. What a problem. And it’s not like getting treated like Nendou or Kaidou are right now would be a huge problem, but I don’t think I could personally stand it.

“Aim for the cross, partner! According to the probabilities, the cross will come next!”

Mister clueless has started shouting loudly again. Along with him, my other classmates also start chanting for the cross sign. That Nendou… who asked him to do that?

Oh well… this is a bigger problem than I expected. I don’t have a problem choosing one of the two cards on the table. The problem is the cross…

Kaidou mutters while looking at the two remaining cards with a dramatic expression.

“I see… the only ones remaining are the cross and the square.”

By the way, Kaidou, I think there’s no cross sign in here.

SAIKI!
SAIKI!
SAIKI!
SAIKI!

I can see the pictures drawn on both cards in front of me. They were both squares.

To be honest, I realized from the very beginning that there were two squares and no crosses among the cards. I thought it was just a printing error, but that seems unlikely now. It's a set of just five cards, and with signs that big, even Kaidou should've noticed at some point. What is the meaning of this, Kaidou?

I can hear Kaidou's thoughts.

(What do I do…? I might have left the cross card back at home…)

My classmates start getting even louder, as an atmosphere of excitement starts surrounding the entire classroom. Kaidou's face starts losing its color progressively.

(I kind of get the feeling that I might have left it on my desk earlier…)

So this is what happened.

Kaidou bought two identical sets of ESP cards. Kaidou particularly likes the cross cards and so he frequently takes them out of their sets and poses in front of a mirror while wearing an overcoat. *(I'm a wizard who can control the ripples of the crosses…)* he'll mutter while doing this sort of stuff late at night.

In doing that, at some point he forgot those cards on his desk back at home, and brought the rest of the cards along with him to school.

Damn it, Kaidou. You only realized that you forgot them now?!

I look at the two square cards lying in front of me and slightly raise my eyebrows.

The atmosphere inside the classroom that had been cheerful until recently suddenly turns serious and tense. Everyone is watching my every movement and closely concentrating on my clenched fist on top of the table.

Kaidou starts breaking a cold sweat as he tries to talk to me with confidence.

“Hmph! Calm down, Saiki. And then you’ll be able to feel the cross card in front of you…” *(Well, maybe I did bring it with me. Maybe all of the cards were together after all…)*

I don’t feel traces of any cross card.

I sigh at Kaidou’s self-reassurance. I look at him as he looks completely fooled by his own lie. Kaidou is even more of an airhead than I expected. Sorry Kaidou, but I won’t be covering up for your mistake. It can’t be helped. The best thing I can do is just pull out a square card, and before my likeability plummets completely, reveal the second square card along with Kaidou’s mistake. Then this will be all over.

Sorry, Kaidou. I just don’t want to stand out.

I look straight at the cards, and prepare to draw one.

(No, but still…)

I hear Kaidou’s thoughts once again.

(What do I do…? What if there’s no cross card in there as I suspect? I’d feel sorry for making Saiki embarrass himself like that. Maybe I should just confess to all of them… But then I’d ruin the mood for everyone… What do I do?)

Kaidou glances downwards, troubled. I simply draw the square card in front of me.

“Woah! It’s a cross! That’s amazing, partner! Now you’re an esper as well!”

Nendou raises his voice yet again. All my other classmates follow suit.

Nendou happily hugs me as I just stare into the ESP card with completely inexpressive eyes. Good grief… I wanted to simply observe the situation, but I had to do this if I didn’t want to stand out.

Kaidou opens his mouth in surprise and looks at the cross card.

(That’s good… So it was there after all… Maybe I just imagined misplacing it.)

You can leave it at that, yes. In reality all I did was changing the card with another. I switched the square card in front of me with the cross card back at Kaidou's home. It's a simple magic trick… for an esper.

Now completely relieved that all cards were there, Kaidou is starting to laugh boldly.

"As expected of you, Saiki. You truly are meant to be my—"

"Good job, partner! We got them all right, partner!"

Nendou, you interrupted Kaidou again, and he looked like he was about to say something.

"We all worked together with our powers! This is the result of our teamwork!"

Hairo shouts excited. All my classmates keep cheering on.

More importantly, though, there's no point in guessing ESP cards one by one instead of all at the same time. If you guess them one by one, then each remaining set will have better probabilities, and then it's no longer an experiment. I can't believe no one else noticed that, and instead decided to get carried away.

I just remain quietly in my seat.

Well, now that everyone guessed their cards correctly, I'm sure I'll be able to go back to my invisible existence. Good grief… I can finally read in peace.

Just as I'm thinking that, I decide to check on my popularity meter.

The popularity meter is one of the powers I have with my telepathy. It allows me to check how popular I am with people around me, and how popular others are as well. Of course, only I can see the meter.

I try to keep my popularity not too high, but not too low either. That's exactly what it means to be an invisible existence.

However, this time my popularity meter gives me a big surprise.

Apparently, even though I basically didn't do anything special, the meter went down. I try to keep it on average at 50, however now it's down to 40!

What's going on?

I simply tried to not stand out as much as possible, and sat down in my seat. I haven't done anything particular since entering the classroom. Not to mention that I haven't even said anything…

I even fulfilled everybody's expectations by getting the card right, so if anything, my meter should be over 50 right now. And yet, why is it going down?

I immediately understand the reason.

(The ESP cards were really fun, but doesn't Saiki seem really close with Nendou?)

All my classmates have calmed down from the excitement earlier, and they're now giving me wary looks as I listened to their thoughts.

(Saiki and Nendou… the two of them sure seem awfully close, right?)

(Those two seem to be way beyond the stage of just friendship… don't tell me…!)

(Come to think of it, why does Kaidou have something like that in the first place? And isn't Saiki super close to him as well? Do they get along? Do they fight that organization together?)

(So Saiki truly is Nendou's partner in the end… He normally seems so quiet and easygoing, but you can never really tell what he's thinking.)

I'm starting to understand what these guys are thinking…

(I should be the one getting celebrated and cheered on…!)

Ah, these are obviously Takahashi's thoughts.

Nendou and Kaidou surround me again and start talking about the same things from earlier. All of my other classmates retreat to their respective seats and look at us coldly.

"Partner! Now that we managed to get all the cards right, why don't we go and eat some ramen?"

First period hasn't even started, and this is the second time you've said that today.

“More importantly, Saiki, don’t you want to train these amazing powers together?”

No, I think mine are developed enough. I can even see your organs.

Nendou is standing to my right and Kaidou to my left. And both of them keep speaking to me at the same time.

Could you two just stop that already?

Oh well, I guess having powers isn’t all that useful after all.

All I can do right now is just sit here in despair as I watch my popularity meter plummet completely… I’m totally helpless.

Not to mention how unhappy it makes me to be able to pick up my classmates’ thoughts in real time.

No…

Even if I couldn’t listen to their thoughts, just their cold glances are tough enough to bear.

Esper or not, this atmosphere would be pretty hard for anyone. Especially when there’s someone around who is clueless above everyone else.

“It definitely is time to go and get some ramen! Eh, partner?”

“You’re such a bother! Saiki obviously is going to train his powers with me!”

Just do that on your own.

Saiki Kusuo's Interlude ❶

"Okay everyone! Now I'm going to bend this spoon!"

During the break, Takahashi somehow managed to gather all our classmates around him again.

So he's going to be bending spoons after his stunt with the ESP cards, huh… I think he might be watching too much TV. I cast Takahashi a bored look.

"He's going to bend that spoon! Let's take a look, partner!"

Nendou taps my shoulder as he invites me to come with him. Go on your own.

"That's just regular magic… how boring. That's child's play."

Kaidou crosses his arms as he hesitantly dismisses Takahashi. Go if you want to go already.

With all eyes set on him, Takahashi gives a smug face and the spoon he's holding begins to bend slowly. All my classmates' eyes remain fixed on the spoon.

"That's amazing! Are you really doing it?!"

"No way! Takahashi, you're amazing!"

The spoon keeps bending like caramel in front of Takahashi, and all my classmates start cheering loudly.

"Th-That's nothing, Saiki. Th-That kind of technique is just some fake magic that regular humans can cast. I-I-It's just plain stupid. Just child's play, got it?! Hey, Saiki. You think so as well, right?"

You were still here, Kaidou? If you want to take a closer look then stop trying to play indifferent and go already. Look at Nendou. His mouth is wide open as he looks at the spoon. You should go do the same. Well, maybe not in the same ridiculous manner, but at least you can be more honest than that.

"What's going on?! Did you practice this?"

“Show us how to do it, Takahashi!”

“You must have some sort of trick, right?”

My classmates start asking questions, but Takahashi just smiles wryly.

“Hey, hey. You can’t do that. You can’t call this a trick, when it’s all just psychic powers. It’s not your regular cheap magic trick.” *(To be honest this is just a spoon that I bought at the magic shop the other day! It was a little expensive, but I’m sure all the girls will fall for me now!)*

Takahashi, the only thing I’m impressed by is your own stupidity. For real.

As he does that, Kaidou, who was still looking at him feigning boredom, gets fidgety and starts muttering something.

“Hmph. That’s just child’s play. Completely stupid. For real, regular humans are always like that… they’ll get excited over absolutely anything. But wait a minute…. Maybe that technique is the forbidden one’s…? No way… However, what if just hypothetically, it truly were that famous technique…? Saiki, don’t you get any evil vibes from Takahashi? Bending a spoon is nothing more than child’s play, but I’ll still go and check it, just in case.”

And so Kaidou rushes in to see Takahashi’s magic trick. Even though in reality he wanted to see it up close all along. By the way, Kaidou, weren’t you calling that “child’s play” just a little earlier?

Takahashi is now bending a second and a third spoon. He bends them into U shapes, until they no longer even look like spoons.

“Touch the spoons, make sure that they’re actually hard and sturdy!”

He gives my classmates the spoons he just bent, and smiles. I can feel the tension start to rise among my classmates as they start inspecting the spoons.

“Woah, no way! It’s hard and it won’t budge! This would be impossible to bend by a regular human!!”

“That’s incredible, it’s just like I saw on TV. How did you bend this?!”

“I can’t believe you did that. It won’t return to how it used to be!”

The spoons go from hand to hand among my classmates.

“No way… I don’t have enough power?! I can’t believe it…”

Mister Jet-Black Wings (16 years old) is struggling hard with the spoon.

However…

“Eh? I tried to bend it but it just broke at the base.”

“Woah!! Nendou is even stronger!!”

Everyone’s gaze shifts towards Nendou, who in an attempt to bend the spoon, just broke it in half. He started taking all the bent spoons, and in an attempt to return them to normal, just broke them one after the other. Takahashi kept bending spoons without noticing Nendou, but the rest of the classroom’s attention had completely shifted and now no one was looking.

In a corner Takahashi keeps shouting by himself.

“How do you like that?! This technique relies on the torque!”

“What do you think, partner? It’s not just Takahashi. Maybe I also have some psychic powers myself.”

Nendou, that’s not psychic power, that’s just brute force.

“Alright everyone! Take a look. I’m going to bend this fork next!”

Takahashi finally notices everyone’s interest focusing towards Nendou, and makes an attempt to regain some attention by bending a fork. Takahashi is a surprisingly pitiful man. I felt sympathy for him as I kept watching Nendou break every single spoon he bent.

Chapter 2 Get them back! The Lost Memories

My name is Saiki Kusuo. I'm an esper.

I possess the powers of telepathy, psychokinesis, clairvoyance, teleportation, x-ray vision, and others that regular humans don't have. The list could go on for a long time, and if I started listing all my powers, we would never move on.

However, I have full control over all of those powers.

And I can do pretty much anything with them.

I can read people's minds, make things move without touching them, make cloudy weather disappear altogether, or even know what manga will get cancelled next.

By the way, allow me to digress, but our very first manga that was released before we were even serialized was also my doing. Just like this novelization. As I said, I can do anything with my powers.

However…

One day, that man suddenly showed up in front of me.

That's right. The man who can only say "Eh?," "Partner" and "Ramen." Nendou Riki.

Nendou's thoughts are the only ones that I can't listen with my powers. This is the first time that has ever happened. I can read the minds of Buddhist monks while meditating, and I can even read the minds of animals, but for some reason I can't read his mind.

Using my telepathy powers, I can always tell who is around me, but Nendou will suddenly show up without me noticing, and I'll have no way to tell when he got there in the first place.

Why can't I read his mind? I noticed immediately after meeting him. Nendou manages to think of absolutely nothing, unlike most regular people. Basically, he's a simple-minded idiot.

He's just a cleft chin muscle man that can appear out of nowhere. Well, he always invites me to go eat ramen with him after school. Of course, that's impossible for me, since I only want to live a quiet life without standing out as much as possible. I can't have people start saying that I'm Nendou's best friend or anything like that.

Today I've managed to avoid Nendou the telepathy jammer, and decided to take a different route on my way back home, stopping by the bookstore in front of the station to buy a novel that I want to read.

I look at the burning sunset as I walk along the riverside.

The local baseball team is practicing on their field right next to the riverside. Their loud cheers can even reach me as I walk along.

"Hey, hey, hey!"

"Hey, come on! Let's go!"

"Ramen! Partner! Ramen!"

What's that? I feel like I just heard a voice that wasn't meant to be there.

I slowly turn around, and running happily towards me is Nendou.

Why are you here?

Nendou is carrying a baseball bat and glove, and wearing a uniform. He's waving at me as he keeps running.

"Nice timing, partner! I was just about to go and eat some ramen."

No, go back to play baseball.

I don't get it. I really can't read his thoughts alone.

Is your personality just ramen? Weren't you here to play baseball? Besides, were you going to go eat ramen with a baseball bat in hand? I'm sure the police would've stopped you on your way there.

To make matters worse, he keeps talking.

"Eh? Let's go eat ramen already! This ramen place is really the best, eh?"

He keeps talking, but can you believe what he actually ordered there?

He ordered meat and fried vegetables.

Nendou… I really can't understand you. I can't understand your actions, and that's the scariest part about it.

I shudder at his cluelessness.

“Partner, let’s go eat some ramen, eh?”

Nendou looks straight at me.

Good grief, there we go again with the ramen.

Every now and then I would rather eat some cake from the cheap café in front of the station. However, I’m sure Nendou would just laugh it off if I suggested that. That’s why I won’t do it. Besides, I’m sure rumors would spread if I went there together with Nendou. That’s why there’s no way we’re going there.

No, it’s not that I particularly would like to go anywhere together with Nendou in the first place, though…

That’s right. Come to think of it, why am I even considering the possibility of going anywhere with Nendou? It’s not like I have to hang out with him for any particular reason.

I’d much rather go home quickly to read the novel that I just bought. I’ll just head home already. The fastest way to get home would be to teleport myself there. Luckily, I can use some of my powers in front of Nendou and he won’t even notice.

I haven’t even given him a reply yet, and he’s already going on and on about the ramen place.

“Besides, at that ramen place, the owner wears some really strange clothes. I think that’s hilarious. No matter how you look at them, they’re not ramen clothes in any way.”

I think no matter how I look at you, you don’t look like the type to eat ramen in the first place.

“And the base of the ramen isn’t particularly good or bad, really—”

Alright. I’m going home. I give Nendou a cold look as he keeps going on and on, and I get ready to go back home.

Maybe I should just disappear while he keeps talking about the same restaurant.

At that moment, I hear a noise coming from the riverside. It was a brisk and delicate sound.

A stray ball that someone had batted far too high was falling in a straight line directly towards me. What a terrible foul ball. Something similar has already happened.

At that time, I used my psychokinesis to change the ball's trajectory… but I won't do that now. Back then, I changed its trajectory and it ended up hitting Nendou, which made me feel bad for him. Unlike Nendou, I consider myself studious enough to actually learn from my own mistakes.

I think my best option is to evade the ball without changing its trajectory at all. This is a new, natural-looking method that I've come up with.

I simply kneel down to fix my shoelaces, and make it seem like a big coincidence.

With this, I won't have to feel bad for Nendou, and I'll avoid the stray ball without getting unwanted attention. It's the perfect method.

I'll kneel down to fix my shoelaces—not like they need it—and let the ball fly over my head. However, as I'm getting ready to kneel down—

"Watch out, partner!!"

Nendou suddenly pushes me away, and stands in the place where I used to be. Laying on my butt after being pushed by Nendou, I look up and see the ball striking him square in the head.

It was a loud and blunt sound.

I see, so this is how it's going to turn out.

Nendou tumbles down crying out in pain. I stand up while dusting off my uniform.

Not being able to read someone's mind or actions is truly scary. I never expected Nendou to notice the ball and to get in my place to protect me.

I look at Nendou, whose eyes are now spinning from the hit.

Nendou… I feel like getting hit in the head by a baseball must be a pretty serious incident.

I look at Nendou as his forehead begins to swell.

He’s not reacting. Is he okay?

I take a look around.

It can’t be helped, I guess I’ll go search for—

And just as I was thinking that, Nendou suddenly stands up like nothing happened. Seems like he’s okay. However, Nendou just starts walking away without even noticing me, or saying anything.

What? He’s not going to eat ramen?

I look at Nendou’s back as he sloppily keeps walking away under the sunset.

Well, I guess it’s fine…

Guess I’ll head back home and finally read my book. I watch him walk away.

———◆———

The next day.

In the classroom before first period, I’m sitting in the same place as always, reading a book. Everyone’s happily talking and making noise, gathered in the same groups of several people. Generally, I don’t like noisy environments, but it’s kind of reassuring when it’s inside the classroom. Everyone is so focused on speaking that no one seems to notice me. No one acknowledges my existence. Besides, being able to listen to everyone’s thoughts isn’t particularly stressful when all they’re trying to do is have some fun with their friends.

Reading a book in these conditions isn’t bad at all.

I don’t mind this level of noise as long as I’m able to properly concentrate on the story.

More of my classmates start coming in one after the other. And then…

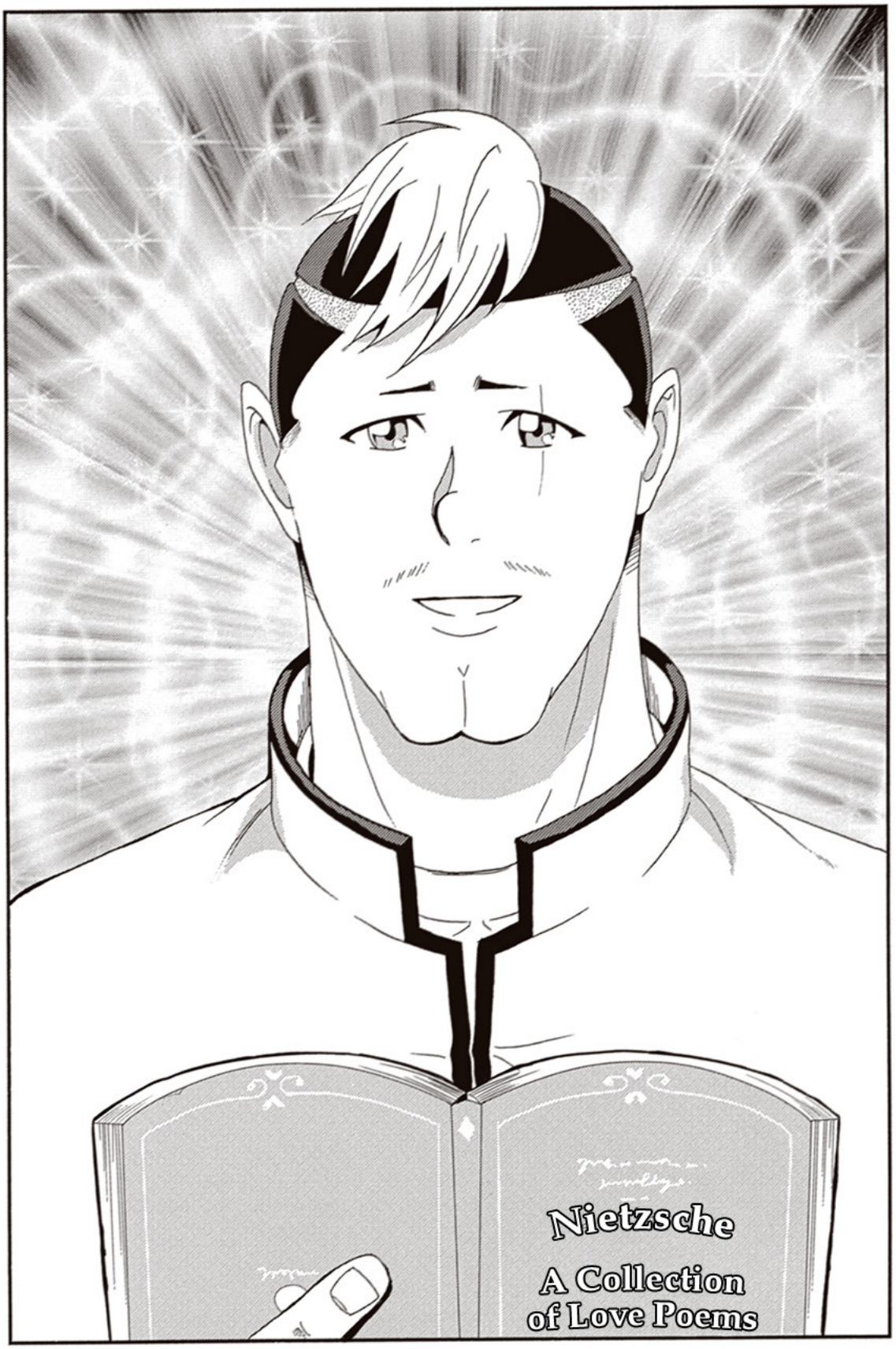
“Eh? Nietzsche, partner?”

There he is. Nendou. I was wondering when he was going to show up, but he's always unpredictable. The only creature unaffected by my telepathy. The only thing I can't ever know is when he's going to come to school.

Also, sorry Nendou, but this isn't Nietzsche, it's Dazai. Dazai Osamu's "No Longer Human." And by the way, the title doesn't refer to you, Nendou, so rest at ease. Also, I forgot to mention it, but this book I'm reading was published of course by Shueisha. The price and quality are incredible, of course. You can really tell that they did their best with it. For some reason my sixth sense told me that I should say that right now.

Good grief, there he goes again, talking about ramen and Nietzsche this early in the morning… Nietzsche?! What?!

Nendou is smiling with his pure white teeth. I have to take a closer look to make sure it is in fact him. He definitely looks like Nendou Riki. However, what the hell is going on?! What is this?! He's a completely different person now. Even the entire aura surrounding his body has changed. Nendou has always looked more like a delinquent. "Ga ha ha, ramen? Eh, ramen?" would make up almost everything he says. That's what he should be! He's a creature that only longs for ramen day and night. The earth could be getting destroyed and he would still be thinking of eating ramen. No way he would be thinking or even aware of words like "nihilism." At the very least, that's the person Nendou was until yesterday. What in the world happened to him? Why did he become this way…?


Nietzsche
A Collection
of Love Poems

I think I figured it out. It must have been the stray baseball that hit him in the head yesterday. Nendou was acting strange after that.

Don't tell me… that this is…

Amnesia?!

No, wait a second. Can we really have a cliché plot straight out of a manga like someone getting amnesia after a blow to the head? Well, this is a novelization, after all. But is it okay, really? Are you sure, Yujiro? You might end up destroying the plot that Asou-sensei has built with so much effort.

(TL Note: Saiki is talking about the manga's original editor and the author, breaking the fourth wall.)

As I keep worrying about these things, Kaidou shows up at school. In his hand he's holding his cellphone against his ear, and he seems to be talking to someone.

"Tsk. Today's wind seems to be raging as well… Is it calling to me? Ah, no, just talking to myself. Don't worry about it. More importantly, what about 'the incident?' Hah! I see, so *they're* moving already…"

Kaidou is approaching my seat as he's still talking on the phone. He takes a look at the clock on top of the blackboard and keeps heading my way.

"Well, let *them* know that their plans are getting leaked!"

Kaidou seems to be about to start laughing.

"Oh, hey there Saiki. Good morning…"

You're not going to hang—I was about to ask, but then obviously he wasn't talking to anyone in the first place. Kaidou simply starts talking before I'm able to say anything.

"Sorry for taking so long, Saiki. I had some important personal matters to attend to."

Though it seems like you weren't speaking with anyone.

Kaidou takes a look out the window and continues.

“Saiki. Apparently the world is going to start going crazy… I can’t believe this… this insane wind is always a messenger for bad news…”

“I was talking about Nietzsche, partner.”

That must be Nendou.

I listen to his meaningless phrase, surprised by the fact that Nendou said it. Not Kaidou, but Nendou. I have to do something about this incomprehensible Nendou.

“Hey, shorty. Do you know Nietzsche? No, not NEET!”

“Ah, it’s just you Nendou. *That’s you, Nendou?!*”

Kaidou’s face completely changes as he takes a closer look at Nendou. He unconsciously raises his voice.

“Wh-What happened?! What’s wrong with you?! You’re pretending to be Nendou and scheming something shady?! What’s your purpose?! You evil fiend. Leave this body immediately!”

Calm down, Kaidou. This isn’t a case of demonic possession.

Kaidou takes off his sunglasses and keeps questioning Nendou.

“What happened?! Go back in peace, spirit!”

I’ve been ignoring this so far, by the way, but what is up with your sunglasses? You even came to school wearing something like that. But I’m not going to dwell on it.

“Hey, Saiki. Something’s wrong with Nendou! That’s right! We could take this to that guy from the other class that can see spirits or something…”

He’s not possessed, Kaidou. Now that you mention it, though… why are both your eyes a different color today?! What’s going on? Did you just leave one color contact on today?

Kaidou scratches his head.

“Wh-What’s even going on…? This can’t be… Nendou would never even know Nietzsche’s name! It would never happen, even if we wished upon endless shooting stars.”

Kaidou, this time I agree with you.

Kaidou raises his head still completely perplexed by what's going on with Nendou.

"I see! He must have some form of amnesia! Damn you, organization… You've messed with him now…!"

You have a good intuition, Kaidou. It wasn't an organization but a stray baseball, but you're pretty much right.

"I would've never expected he'd turn out like this with amnesia… Nendou should be more the type of ugly looking guy that walks around town muttering stuff about ramen, eating ramen, partner and evil winds."

The one who talks about evil winds is you, though. But I generally agree.

Kaidou gives a dry laugh and then starts talking to Nendou.

"Hey, Nendou? Try saying 'Eh!' Say 'Eh? Ramen?!' Please say that!"

"Ramen? What are you talking about? I've always preferred shrimp pilaf."

"What… did you just say?"

There's no mistake. He absolutely has amnesia!

"Shrimp pilaf, I'm telling you. Only trendy cafes downtown seem to serve it, but I would love to go and eat some after school, partner. Also, I've got to admit I'm completely enthralled by this Nietzsche masterpiece I'm reading. How should I say it…? It reverberates deep within my soul."

I'm starting to get really concerned as I look at Nendou straight in the face.

Not knowing who you are. Not knowing where you are. Not being able to use a pen or a computer anymore. Or maybe not even knowing the words "pen" or "computer" at all. Those are some of the different types of amnesia known to us.

In Nendou's case, he knows his own name, remembers the commute to PK Academy, our names and even that we know each other. He even seems to remember how the school's uniform is meant to be worn and how he wears it every day, on top of other commonplace items he uses regularly.

However, his personality has completely changed. He seems to be way too tidy now. And it seems to be showing on his face and expressions as well. His face looks all gallant now. However, I'm still completely unable to read his mind, just like usual. Though it's much scarier not being able to read this smart Nendou's actions or thoughts, compared to the usual cleft chin idiot.

Alright, what are we going to do, then?

I stay in my seat, deep in thought, as Kaidou starts talking to Nendou.

"Do you know what your name is?"

"Eh? You've been saying my name all this time, right? Of course I'd know my own name."

Kaidou remains quiet after listening to Nendou's reply. I think we're both assessing Nendou's current situation. The best way to do it is to keep asking questions, to confirm what he remembers and what he doesn't.

"First of all, it seems like you remember your own name… and you were also to remember Saiki's, right…?"

"Hey! We are best friends, of course I would!"

Huh?! I think I just felt a chill running down my spine. Did I catch a cold?

"So you can recognize all your surroundings, as well as remembering your relationships with other people. Let me tell you this, but you can call me the 'Jet-Black Wings,' which is the name I adopted as a Grade A fighter against the Dark Reunion. Got that?"

There's no way he would get that.

"Well, I had to run away after finding out the Dark Reunion's true objectives by experimenting on humanoid androids, after one traitor ousted me. In any case, you can also call me by the name 'Wolfensbein,' 'The Virtuous Contrarian,' or even 'Hoshikuzu Kyou' (Sir Stardust). Whichever is fine."

Seems like I'm suffering from amnesia as well, since I don't remember ever hearing any of that.

Well, in any case, this is not the time to be worrying about something like that, Kaidou. Though just for the record, would it be okay if I simply

translated your name and started calling you “Sir Stardust” translated in English?

Kaidou’s eyes start glittering with hope, as he speaks to Nendou.

“Nendou, there’s no doubt that your memories were stolen by the Organization… The only way to reverse it is to show you the right thing to break their spell. However, you’re incredibly lucky that I’m here to help you. Ha ha ha! Dark Reunion, I won’t let you get away with this!”

Sir, can you please shut up already, Sir?

Kaidou keeps blabbering on about his imaginary stories, while Nendou has a serious expression on his face.

“You’ve always been the talkative type, after all. Do you have some kind of inferiority complex? Or maybe you’re aiming to become a mangaka or a renowned fantasy author in the future?”

Nendou smiles with clearly no ill intent. However, Sir returns to his own self after hearing that.

“Eh? Well, I… Not really, I just… Not at all.”

His face turns beet red, as he tries to explain in the meekest voice, as loud as a mosquito.

Thinking that this Nendou can even bring Kaidou back to reality from his delusions is only scarier now!

“I-In any case! If you’re able to remember us…” says Kaidou, his cheeks still slightly flushed in embarrassment, attempting to continue with Nendou’s assessment.

“What about our classmates? For instance, what’s the name of that guy next to the window?”

“Eh? That’s Hairo, the class representative, right? I can’t see his face from all the light behind him, though.”

“You seem to remember our classmates’ names as well. Then what about the one next to him?”

“That’s Matsuo, right? Then there’s Sawakita, Yumehara and *Oh!*-san”

That would be Teruhashi.

Nendou keeps listing the names of our classmates.

“That’s Kashimura, Yuasa, Uno, Ukai, Dionysus, Zarathustra…”

Nendou keeps the names coming without stopping. Kaidou simply nods.

“I see, well, of course you’d remember all of their names.”

No, I think he’s seeing some things he shouldn’t be seeing.

“Ah! And there’s Sorbe and Takahashi too. Remember them?”

“Sure! Sorbe! What a guy! Ta… ka… hashi?”

“Seems like you have all of our classmates’ names right… And that one you can’t remember is probably just a leftover from your old personality.”

I get the feeling that all of Nendou’s memories involving Takahashi were simply buried deep inside his brain to begin with.

“What do we do, Saiki? Aside from not talking about ramen, this Nendou seems to have most of his memories intact. Besides, instead of looking like he has amnesia, I get the feeling that now he has even more memories than before…?”

Kaidou starts whispering to me. I just remain quiet, deep in thought.

Apparently the only thing that’s missing from Nendou’s memory is the word “ramen.” For some reason, that’s the only one that got erased from his already very limited vocabulary.

So does this mean that he lost all memories related to his own hobbies?

“Would it be wrong to… simply leave him like this?” says Kaidou.

Well, what do you think, Kaidou? Would you really be okay with living in a world where Nendou goes to trendy cafes to eat shrimp pilaf after school? Doesn’t that sound wrong? At the very least, I don’t want that Nendou with us.

Besides, having a much smarter and knowledgeable Nendou walking around, still completely immune to my psychic powers seems like a great

risk to me. If a freak of nature like that is our only other option, then I no doubt prefer the original Nendou.

However, what should we do?

I keep racking my head over this. Kaidou crosses his arms and says

“Amnesia, huh…? I’ve thought about this scenario many times before.”

I’m sure you have. This is the kind of scenario that would regularly appear in manga and dramas.

“I get the feeling that we could get him back to normal by giving him a blow just as hard as the one that made him this way. But I don’t know what to do then. I can’t figure out how to do it if I don’t know what got him into this state in the first place…”

I have a feeling that I do know what got him like that.

Kaidou takes his hand to his chin as he submerges deep in thought. I simply sigh silently.

Seems like I’m going to have to step up and fix this.

It’s decided then. I’ll use my powers to turn Nendou back to normal.

Nendou… let’s go and eat ramen again after school.

———◆———

I hate P.E. And it’s not because I’m particularly terrible at it or anything. I’ll make this clear. I don’t hate doing sports because I’m particularly bad at physical activity. In fact, I like to think that I’m quite decent at it. It’s just that I find it extremely difficult.

Maybe that sounded complicated. I just find it extremely hard to get on the level of regular people.

For example, imagine I actually tried to play catch seriously. What do you think would happen? I’ve personally never tried it for real, so this is just a theory, but I think 8 out of 9 people who would try to catch one of my pitches would disappear. They’d vanish from this world altogether.

For example, imagine I actually tried to play soccer seriously. If I tried to shoot at the goal with all my strength, what do you think would happen?

This is also just a theory, but I get the feeling that if you had a photographer around the pitch taking pictures, from that point onwards you might as well consider him a war photographer.

Basically, in order to be able to play any sports at the level of regular people, I have to constantly be extremely careful not to overdo it, and instead try to play with the minimum strength I can. This is also extremely exhausting on my body. There's hardly any activity more difficult for me. That's why I hate P.E.

However, just for today, I'm glad that we have P.E right before lunch. And then again, I'm even more glad that we will be playing softball.

We split into four teams and start two matches. My classmates scatter around the grounds with their respective gear.

The match begins. I try to stay next to Nendou as we are in the same team. I can hear the voices and shouts from my classmates in the other pitch standing far away from us.

"Woaaaah! Get into it! Put your heart into it!!! We're gonna win! We're gonna win!!!"

One of them was naturally the voice of Hairo. What a passionate guy. Just his voice sounds incredibly passionate already. Being next to him is almost like being inside a sauna. I'm glad that I'm not in the same team as him, and even more glad that I'm not in the team going up against him.

Kaidou takes the bat and starts walking around the pitch as I keep thinking about Hairo.

"Hmph. Guess I'll have to actually make some effort for once."

Kaidou smiles mysteriously as he dramatically points the bat towards the sky. Maybe he's pretending he just hit a home run or something. However, my sight can only return to the other team and Hairo, who's still shouting.

My classmates for some reason took it upon themselves to try to make me feel good, and put me in the same team as Nendou and Kaidou, supposedly because we're friends or whatever. However, I'm glad they did that today…

I hear the sound of the bat hitting the ball, and then realize the other team has just hit a foul ball. I intensely stare at the ball that rises up in the sky. I was waiting for this!

I start guiding the ball with my psychokinesis. I'm going to try hitting Nendou's head with this ball!

"So you know about Descartes? I still think I prefer Nietzsche."

I direct the ball straight towards Nendou as he keeps talking about that.

"Eh? My shoelaces…"

Nendou suddenly says, as he kneels and starts fixing his own shoelaces. I stand completely awestruck.

No way…

Can this really happen? He coincidentally managed to avoid the ball's trajectory… You would've gotten hit by it if you were still you!

"I'm sorry, Saiki-kun! I never thought the ball would've gone that far!" Hairo shouts from the other side.

"Ball? Ah, this, right?"

Nendou picks up the ball that should have slammed directly into his head, and throws it back at them.

"Strike! Batter out!"

At the same time, Kaidou walks back to us with a blank and dead expression on his face.

I kept trying to land an attack on Nendou for a while.

But coincidences keep piling up one after the other, and I'm not able to strike him with a single ball, no matter how much I use my psychokinesis. Perhaps his senses have become sharper, or perhaps he has some sort of divine being protecting him. He keeps evading stray balls left and right, almost as if he has some psychic powers.

Every single time I'm able to direct a ball towards him:

"Oh? Is that something on the ground? I have to pick it up."

"My shoelaces again!"

"Partner, do you know the meaning behind 'God is dead?'"

“Look, partner. A ladybug!”

“Oh no, my shoelaces again…”

“Partner, do you know why the sky is blue?”

“My shoelaces… *again?!”*

No matter how many balls I try to hit Nendou with, he always manages to avoid them. What’s going on?

Meanwhile, I hear my classmates discussing their match.

“Hey, we’re having a lot of foul balls today.”

“I know, right? Maybe foul balls are controlled by god…”

That’s not it. That was just me. What might be truly connected to god is Nendou himself. But of course I would not be able to tell them that.

Good grief, I need to calm down. Any more than this and they might notice something strange is going on.

I just keep using any regular foul balls they shoot our way as an attempt for the rest of the class.

Then the bell rings.

Completely astonished, I just stand in place for a while.

No way. I can’t believe I wasn’t able to hit Nendou a single time… I should’ve been able to strike him hundreds of times, surely… This is a nightmare.

I pick up some gloves and balls while everyone goes back to the classroom. Today it’s my turn to pick them up and take them to the storage house.

I can’t let it end like this!

I spot a single forgotten soccer ball on the pitch. Did someone forget to put it away? I make sure no one’s around, and move it with my psychokinesis. I’m going to make this hit Nendou in the head on his way back to the classroom!

“My shoelaces again… is this a result of Gnosticism?!”

The soccer ball flies above and past Nendou's head. I thought maybe I'd have better chances with a soccer ball, considering it is bigger, but no luck. By the way, how many times are you going to tie your shoes today?! Do it right this time!

After P.E is done, my classmates skip going to the classroom and instead play catch in the garden. Seems like they want to use some time from our lunch break to play.

My other classmates that decided to head to the classroom instead were making a big ruckus for some reason.

"Woaah! Takahashi seems to have fainted!"

"What's wrong?! What happened?!"

"He sort of complained a little and then suddenly collapsed…"

"A soccer ball came flying from who-knows-where!!"

Seems like something's going on. The teacher and my classmates were all gathering in a crowd. However, this is not the time for that. I have to get Nendou back to his old self…

"Huh? Apparently there was some kind of accident. Let's go, Saiki!"

You go by yourself.

I watch Kaidou run off towards the crowd with a smile on his face. Kaidou, sorry, I have to make sure an accident happens to Nendou's head right now.

All of my classmates who were also playing catch got mesmerized by the crowd and followed Kaidou, leaving only Nendou and me. This is it. This might be my last chance…

I look at Nendou's head. He has been somehow managing to avoid all my psychic powered attacks. I'm going to make sure a ball smashes into his head, even if I have to use up every last one in school!

I use my ability to teleport things to get my hands on one of the softballs that were inside the storage room. There are other several different types of balls lying around, so I decide to take those out as well. By the way, there's a clearer explanation on my object teleportation powers in manga volumes 0 and 3.

As the small crowd looks on, Nendou shouts, “Eh?! Seems like someone collapsed! Partner, I’ll go and help out!”

No Nendou, there’s no need. You ask why? Well, that’s because you’ve already collapsed as well.

I make all the balls that I took out of the storage room start heading towards Nendou directly. They start falling like comets from the sky.

However.

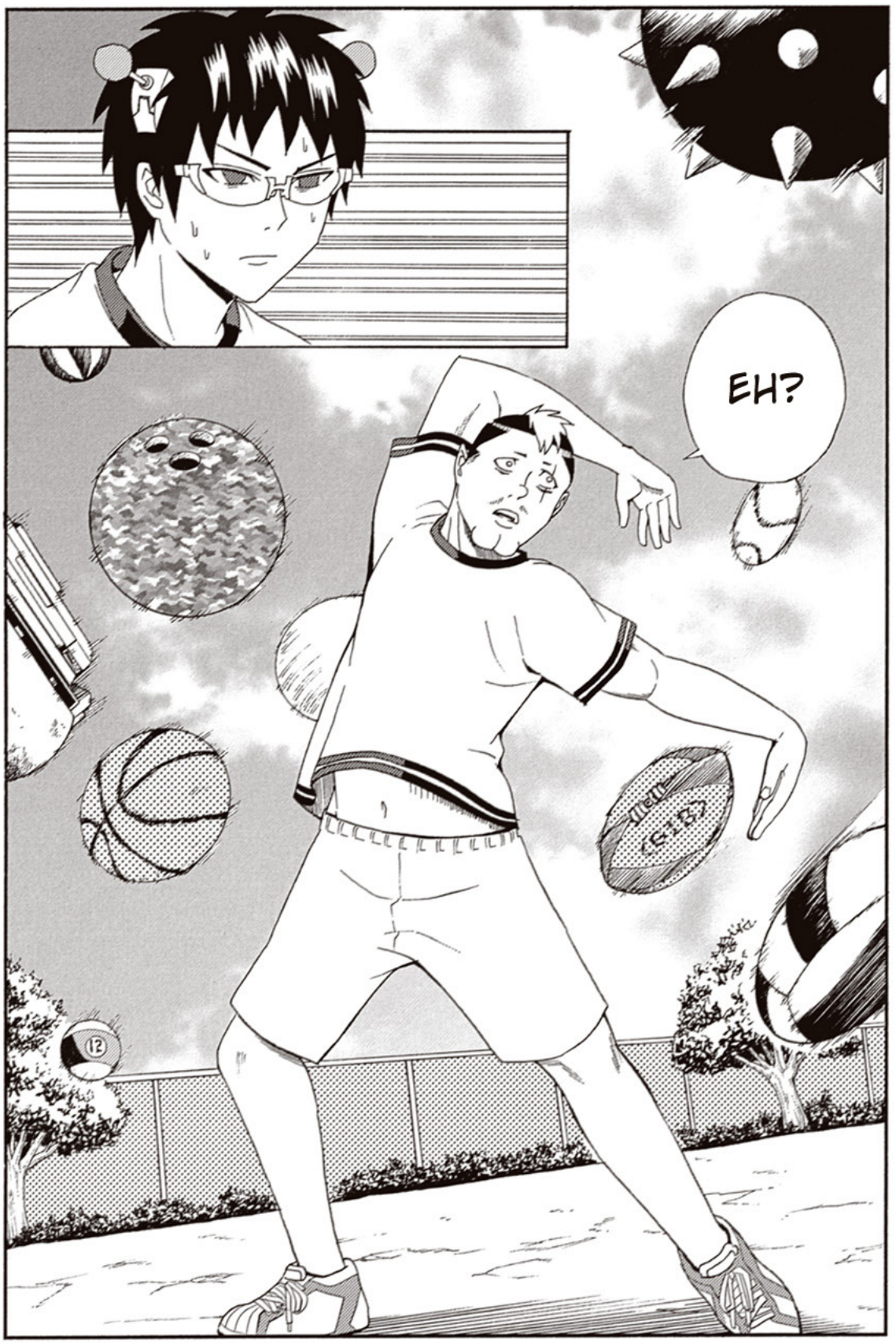
The baseball doesn’t hit him. The volleyball doesn’t hit him. Neither does the lacrosse ball, the basketball, the tennis ball, the golf ball, the rugby ball, or the cricket ball.

Nendou swiftly evades all of them with perfect reflexes. I even made sure to pack his surroundings with an insane amount of projectiles, but he doesn’t get hit even once.

I start to feel seriously strained after using my powers nonstop since P.E. I’ve said it before, but my powers aren’t unlimited. They’ll wear you out just like exercise if you use them too much. I can’t just use them eternally.

As my face distorts from the efforts, I keep shooting even more balls towards Nendou.

The billiard balls don’t hit him, and neither does the balance ball.


EH?

I throw a beach ball, a bowling ball, and swimming pool balls at him, but they all miss, just like the marbles, the road roller and even the justice iron tornado ball… What even is that?

Nendou manages to escape from each ball's trajectory with amazing dexterity. He doesn't miss a single step as he becomes an untouchable… no, an *unkillable* target.

Why am I not hitting him at all?!

I have powers that could totally split the sky in two if I wanted to, yet I'm completely unable to hit him with my attacks. Besides, every second I'm losing more control over my psychokinesis powers.

Seems like I've hit my limit.

And at that moment:

"Woah, watch out!!"

I hear someone scream along with a high-pitched sound whistling through the air. It's a sound that I recognize. This is the sound of someone batting a baseball. I try to turn towards its origin, but I'm blinded by the sunlight. I got too caught up in my current situation and completely ignored that my classmates had gone back to playing catch, and someone had just batted a ball. A ball that is now flying directly at me.

I've used my psychokinesis too much. I can't think straight. That's right. I just need this ball to hit Nendou. As long as it does, he'll get his memories back and this will all be over. If only I could just make this one ball strike Nendou in the head…

This is bad!

I need to come back to my senses. My head's spinning from all the effort. The ball that's flying through the sky is going to hit me. Not Nendou. That's its trajectory. How ironic. I was so focused on hitting Nendou, that I didn't pay attention to my surroundings.

Should I try to change its course with my psychokinesis? No, it's no good. The ball's trajectory will look too suspicious if I do that. Everyone's watching. All of my classmates' gazes are fixed on me right now.

In that case, the best I can do is just change its trajectory slightly, so it won't be a nasty blow at least. But considering how tired I am, I don't even know if I'll be able to do it.

As I ponder about my situation, I hesitate to use my powers. The ball is getting closer.

"Watch out, partner!!"

I've seen this happen before. I feel my body get pushed out of the way, and Nendou firmly standing where I was just seconds ago. I fall on my butt and watch in awe as the baseball hits Nendou square in the face.

It was a nasty sound.

Nendou collapses on the floor almost immediately.

"It hit Nendou!!"

"This is bad! Are you okay, Nendou?!"

My classmates who were playing catch come rushing in and shouting. I stand up. My heart is racing. I can't believe that Nendou saved me twice already…

"Ah…"

Nendou moans in pain. And then, "Oh… partner… Are you… okay?"

A ball just came flying into his face, but Nendou is worried about me. He smiles faintly.

"Heh… I promised you, didn't I? I will always help you out." (Volume 0, Chapter 2)

Nendou… you remember that promise?

I can't believe you remember that, even after getting hurt… even after forgetting the word for ramen. I probably have to thank the author for kindly referencing the chapter when that happened, but more importantly…

I have to thank you Nendou. You saved me.

"A-Are you okay, Nendou?!"

My classmates who came rushing in to help Nendou are shouting in panic.

“Where are you bastards aiming?! That hurt!”

“I-I’m sorry. We’ll be more careful from now on… Ah, I think we have to return the ball soon anyway…”

My classmates who just got scolded by Nendou pick up their things and leave. I watch their backs as they run away. Nendou then angrily mutters:

“Damn it, those damned idiots! If it weren’t me they hit, they’d already be dead!”

Nendou’s aura is completely different again. He’s clearly the same person, or at least he should be, but there’s something different about him.

Don’t tell me… Nendou… did you get your memories back?!

“Eh? Partner, I’m hungry. Wanna go eat ramen, eh?”

Nendou looks at me in the eye, and the stupidest smile appears on his face. The man that just earlier this morning was so proper and serious, now looked like a delinquent. He was back to his clueless and stupid self.

“Eh? Let’s go eat ramen! Eh?”

That’s Nendou. Good old Nendou. His memories are back. Good grief, for a moment I got really worried that he wouldn’t come back, but now I think I can live peacefully again. It’s finally over.

“Eh? Let’s go eat ramen, eh?”

Nendou keeps inviting me over and over.

“Eh? Come on, let’s go eat ramen, eh?”

Well, he did help me out, so I think I feel happy about it. Just for today, though.

“Eh? Let’s go eat ramen. Eh?”

Nendou keeps repeating the same line like a broken record.

“Eh, ramen. Eat, eat. Let’s go. Eh? Eh?”

After repeating the same line several times, Nendou begins twitching. Don't tell me that hit…

"Partner, partner! Ra- ra- ra- ra! Ra! Men!"

He's broken now.

"Ramen! Eh? Ra- ra- ra! Part! Men?"

I stand there astonished watching Nendou's fit.

What do I do…?

I stand completely confused in the middle of the pitch.

"Partner, do you know why the sky is blue?"

I remember the face Nendou had when he asked that question to me, right before the ball came flying in.

Good grief… of course a second ball hitting him wouldn't just turn him back to normal. Something so convenient is impossible, though. This isn't a manga…

Why is the sky blue?

I remember because I can only look at the sky after being so naïve.

"Eh? Partner! Eh? Partner! Eh? Eh? Eh? Eh? Eh?"

I'm sure Nendou's loud voice can even reach that blue sky, perfect for a stray baseball.

Saiki Kusuo's Interlude ❷

"Hey, partner, I came to hang out!"

I see Nendou's head behind the door.

Good grief, so this guy won't leave me alone even when I don't go to school.

I sigh. I can't hear any thoughts beyond the door, so I pretend to be absent. Unfortunately for me, however, the door was unlocked. By the time and noticed and try to lock it with my powers, it was already too late. Nendou opened it before I was able to do it.

Come on, you can't be more reckless than that. Leaving your door unlocked in this day and age is the best way to invite thieves into your home, or Nendou, or Nendou or… Nendou.

Maybe I should go out and spread some salt or something. Though I doubt it would work…

I look at Nendou's face with a dumb smile and think about it.

"I visited my relatives the other day and brought some souvenirs."

Nendou extends his hand with a plastic bag on it.

I don't care about that at all, so go home already.

It's something Nendou bought. I'm sure it's not anything special to begin with. I take a look at the bag below me. The words "Hiyuma Products Gift Shop" are written on a box inside it. Don't tell me, this is…!

I take the bag, and take out the box trying to contain my expression. This surpasses anything I had ever imagined.

It's a Hiyuma daifuku!

(TL Note: Originally "Hiyumanjuu" A pun of the words "manjuu" (rice bun) and "Hiyuma" (a city).)

I look at the box with excited eyes.

> **Hiyuma Daifuku**
>
> This is a famous product from the Saitama prefecture. “Any copies will need to cope with the cops.”
>
> The name might be just a pun, but the taste comes from the balanced mix of delicious red bean paste and mountain green tea. Its sweetness has made it one of the four most renowned sweets in Saitama prefecture, along with green rice crackers, sweetened gokabou cakes and potato sweets. The Hiyuma daifuku are so popular, they’re constantly getting sold out.
>
> [citation needed]

Coffee jelly is of course my favorite sweet, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t like traditional Japanese candy. In fact, I really like them. In particular, these Hiyuma daifuku. To the point where I take a train once a month to buy them.

I never expected Nendou to get these for me. Nendou, I’m glad you’re here. Would you like some tea? I welcome Nendou into my home.

I pour some warm tea in the kitchen, and get the daifuku ready for me and Nendou.

Thank you for the meal!

I lose my eyes and taste the “Hiyuma daifuku.” By closing my eyes, I can focus closely on the taste, and the herbal scent of the tea. I imagine the green scenery from the mountain tea while I taste the daifuku. The mountain range that extends through the southwest Saitama prefecture. The forest where Totoro used to live. The rich earth in Saitama prefecture that only begins with a mountain range can be tasted right here.

A beautiful natural scenery to enjoy for generations. Just like this amazing taste. And just like the “Hiyuma daifuku.”

I start feeling hot just from my mental picture. That’s to be expected, though. I always feel warm weather when I’m in Hiyuma.

I keep taking sips of my mountain tea, while I intermittently taste the sweet red bean paste. Hiyuma daifuku definitely goes best with tea. It truly conveys the earthy and natural feeling I’m looking for.

I’m so happy…

We stay like that for a while. I must thank the city of Hiyuma for this.

“But you know, partner? I can’t believe humans can make something so delicious.”

Nendou, what did you just say?!

I completely stop sipping my tea, and look directly at Nendou. Why did he say something so educated all of a sudden?

“Humans truly are amazing creatures, eh?”

Nendou keeps talking, his mouth full of daifuku.

Did he hit his head again?

I start breaking a cold sweat just from imagining it.

“I never expected humans to have something this good. I didn’t know.”

Nendou smiles happily.

“This is so good. I have to go back again to visit Huma.”

Chapter 3 All you can eat! Hinoki Ramen

After school.

I was walking back home together with Nendou and Kaidou.

Good grief… I feel like I'm spending a lot of time with just the two of them after school.

By spending time with Nendou and Kaidou, other classmates don't approach me much, so that's useful. But at the same time, it becomes a completely different problem.

I don't want to stand out. However, by spending time with just the two of them, people might end up talking about me. What a difficult situation.

"Not here yet?"

"That's enough already."

I listen to Kaidou and Nendou talk as I keep racking my brain in silence.

However, no matter how much I think about it, I can't find a good answer. I'm letting my body just guide me on autopilot for today. I hope I'm not so unlucky that the idea to go and eat ramen the three of us together pops up and I end up getting involved with that.

Right now, I'm heading with Nendou and Kaidou to eat ramen at a place he recommends.

Without ever needing to look up online reviews or listen to people talk about places, I can just tell if a place is good or not by reading the minds of their customers.

However, since I can't read Nendou's mind with my powers, and he's the only one who has ever been there, I don't know anything about the place either. I honestly have no idea what kind of place he's taking us to.

Recommended, huh…?

We keep walking slowly, as I think about the kind of things Nendou usually talks about.

The kind of information he usually learns about are urban legends, and other useless stuff. He usually talks about how the local sweet shop owner's brother knows a good restaurant, or how his relative's friend's sister knows this good place, or how the friend of a friend is Ramen Man. He knows all sorts of information that I can't understand at all.

They're all places that, just like today's ramen place, come from odd recommendations. That's exactly why there's no way to realistically know for sure what to expect.

We keep walking as I think about that.

By the way, this is something I find out as we near the ramen place, but apparently this restaurant's quality has been diminishing since it changed owners, and that's how it turned out the way it is today. Though that's completely useless information.

Thanks to my powers, I'm able to gather all sorts of useless information like that. However, unfortunately for me, not even my powers can make this uneasy feeling vanish.

What if this place turns out to be even worse than the Haoh Sho Ko-Ken ramen place we visited the other day?

I prepare myself mentally to run away at any moment.

As I ready myself, I keep walking while being uncomfortably watched by Nendou. Although I usually walk home from school, this time we went in the direction opposite to the station, and are heading into a part of town that I rarely ever visit, full of unknown shops. There are no chain franchises, just regular mom-and-pop stores.

I look at one of them in particular as we walk by it.

It's a small café. It has a rusted metallic sign at its entrance. What a retro look that is. The store is still operating, and the word "OPEN" is written on its door. Despite this being my first time ever seeing it, it's somehow very nostalgic.

I can see the signs of store after store poking out into my sight.

"Sofman Café," "Shirokage Drinking bar," "Hotta Figures and Dolls," "Wakiase Real Estate," "Omega Hotel," "Haywath Café," "Guraguri Café," "The Rendezvous Café," "High Pome Café," "Rasterize Café…" That's a lot of cafés. Looks like a very heated battlefield.

"Eh? We're here, partner."

Nendou stops walking. I look at the plate.

"Hinoki Ramen."

The place's name was written in white letters over a red background. It definitely is a traditional ramen place's sign. In front of the restaurant's name, the words "Super tasty!" are written in gold.

Huh, this is actually a pretty normal ramen place.

I was worried that Nendou was the one guiding us, but both the name and aspect of the place are pretty reassuring. No, I can't let myself get fooled just yet.

"I'm starving. Let's go in already."

The automatic door opens. Nendou enters the place. The clerk greets us with a "Welcome!" as Kaidou, Nendou, and I walk in.

I look around the place. Maybe it's because school's just over for the day, but there are no other customers to be seen. However, the tables and the seats also look pretty normal. Perhaps I was overly prepared for one of Nendou's recommendations, but both the store's outer and inner appearance are completely normal. No matter how you look at it, this is a regular ramen place. The kind that you could find anywhere. I was really concerned, but seems like I was mistaken.

We're then greeted by the waitress wearing a black magician's robe who came to us and—what?!

So it wasn't a regular place after all!

What is she wearing? It doesn't look like a ramen-related outfit at all. Instead of looking suited for serving ramen, it looks like she's going to hit us with a fire spell. Seems like my gut feeling about Nendou's recommendation wasn't wrong after all.

Crisp brew
Super dry!!
We don't serve cold dishes.

We sat down at the bar stools. Chills are running down my spine. Nendou sits to my right, and Kaidou to my left.

“Two salt ramens. One large for me.”

Nendou points his thumb at himself and then at me, to signal that he’s ordering for the two of us.

“Sorry, I’m just starving. I really feel like getting a big one today.”

Says Nendou after downing the entire glass of water served in front of us.

For some reason he decided to order for me as well, but since it’s the first time I come here, that’s fine. Surely it won’t be anything too weird, considering he just ordered regular salt ramen.

“Understood! Two salts! One large!”

“Understood.”

The reply comes from a stifled voice inside the kitchen. The one who replies is another employee, this time a guy who is also wearing a magician costume.

Though different from the waitress’s…

I take a sip of water as I look around the place.

The place’s name, its appearance and its furniture are all completely normal. The only thing out of place is the staff’s uniform. I’ve heard that just surviving in the ramen industry is hard enough. I’m sure this store is trying to stand out from the rest by making its employees wear weird costumes.

Yeah. It’s a regular store. I don’t have to start judging it just because Nendou recommended it.

The masked man in the kitchen is starting to prepare the noodles. That’s probably our—huh?

Masked?

That’s odd… So this isn’t a regular place after all.

I fall deep in thought with the glass of water still in my mouth. I try to take a look at Kaidou, who’s still sitting next to me, and he also looks clearly confused.

The waitress who took our order is now looking at Kaidou with a happy grin on her face.

Kaidou frantically looks at the menu on the table, and then at the same menu written on the wall.

His back somewhat contorted, and his face completely red, as he picks up the menu.

“Eh—Um… Well… I’d like this one…”

“Sorry?”

“Um… I’d like this ‘Black Magic Ramen’ please…”

Wait a minute.

“That one is going to take a little longer if that’s okay.”

“Ah, yeah. That’s fine. I’ll wait…”

“Understood! One black magic ramen!”

I said could you please wait a minute?

What’s with that bizarre “black magic ramen” name? I don’t think that “black magic” is the kind of term you’d like to put on a dish you’re about to eat.

I definitely can’t rest at ease at a place Nendou recommends.

While I’m still worrying about having come to this place, Kaidou looks at me with a clearly satisfied expression.

“Ha! Ha! Ha…! Black Magic, huh…? That’s just the kind of meal for me. Right, Saiki?”

In fact, I think you look normal when compared to the employees here.

Kaidou’s attitude completely changes after having made his order. He sits down comfortably in his chair, and laughs to himself.

Ignoring Kaidou for a second, I pay attention to the music playing inside the restaurant.

It’s an upbeat song. I vaguely remember hearing it in a commercial or something before. I think it was a group of male idols that sang it. It was a group particularly popular with young girls.

What were they called again…? I can’t remember their name.

I try reaching deep inside my memory as I close my eyes.

“Eh? That’s Spleen’s ‘The magic of eating love,’ right?”

That's right. I think that's what the track and band were called… Huh?

I'm completely taken aback by Nendou's nonchalant knowledge about the group and their song.

"Though personally I think cool people like me tend to prefer 'Magnitude Priest.' Right, partner?"

Huh? I don't care.

"Ha! Ha! Amateurs. When talking about Spleen, it has to be 'Moonlight Cerberus' or 'The Pandora's Box of your Eyes.'"

Even Kaidou seems to know about them.

Nendou hears his comments and starts to laugh loudly.

"You have no taste, huh shorty? 'Moonlight Cerberus' was a total flop!"

"Hmph. Of course a man like you would never understand the true greatness behind that song."

"Eh? That's just a track pretending to sound cool, with no substance, eh?"

"What?! I won't let you badmouth 'Moonlight Cerberus' any longer!"

Kaidou and Nendou start arguing while ignoring me. More importantly, you guys were fans?! And you seem to know a lot about them. The two keep arguing about something I can't understand for a while.

As they happily talk to my left and my right on and on, I start to get very annoyed.

Kaidou starts saying something like "Stop it! I won't forgive you if you keep talking crap about Luna's power!" or something like that, as my salt ramen arrives at the table.

"I'm sorry for the wait. One salt ramen!"

It's finally here. Kaidou, who had been happily speaking his mind out until now, suddenly falls quiet.

"The large salt ramen and the black magic ramen will still take a little longer."

The waitress smiles at us. Kaidou looks at her and meekly responds with "Ah… okay…"

In the end, I don't find out what happened to Luna's power or whatever. In any case, I'm focusing on the ramen that just arrived in front of me.

I take in all of its scent that rises from the bowl along with the hot steam. The soup looks beautiful, completely filled with color, adorned with a half-boiled egg on top of it. The pure green onions are soaking in the hot dish. It looks completely perfect. A textbook example of salt ramen.

I swallow excitedly.

Th-This is…!

Without thinking, I open my eyes wide. I split my chopsticks and get ready to dive in.

It's neither amazing nor bad at all. It's a taste that I can't tell apart at all! The very deep scent of its condiments leave a very normal impression, just like the half-boiled egg! Not to mention that neither the thick nor thin noodles are a perfect fit for it! Plenty of ingredients complement the soup! The pork is neither hard nor soft, and it matches just right with the fresh green onions! Not to mention the hot water that accompanies them all! They all come together in their very unique harmony!

Basically:

It's average.

Extremely average. It's just average. So average that I can't really say anything about it. It's just a regular ramen. I'm sure anybody else who ate it would think the exact same thing. But still… what's this feeling?

I can't stop eating it…

That's right. It's neither good nor bad, so I just want to eat it! I just want to eat it normally. What's this…? This is some powerful ramen. It's just like magic…

Speaking of which…

The preparation of Kaidou's black magic ramen is still underway in the kitchen.

The masked man is now pouring the hot water into a large cauldron, and starts stirring its contents in circles.

"Alobarasam. Palorina chomanto. Paramaika…!"

He keeps muttering as he stirs.

The masked man is reciting some sort of incantation, as boiling water starts splashing all over the place. His incantations make the entire kitchen feel somewhat otherworldly.

“Messara! Messara!”

His voice gets louder and louder. As boiling water splashes around, vapor starts clouding the kitchen, making it look mysterious.

“Messara…”

Just as he finishes his incantation, he throws the noodles inside the cauldron.

“Here you go. A black magic ramen.”

A large bowl of soup is placed in front of Kaidou. I’m sure he’s lost his appetite.

Kaidou looks at the ramen, and probably in part thinking about its earlier preparation, gives it a wary look.

The black magic ramen isn’t known just for its preparation, but also for its black appearance. And it’s not just the soup, but the noodles as well. I’m sure the soup uses soy sauce as its base. And the noodles are just dyed with squid ink. In any case, it’s all pitch black. I had never seen so much black food in one place in my entire life.

What can I say…? Well, good for you, Kaidou. Isn’t this the kind of “darkness” that you love so much?

“Ha! Ha! Ha! I see. ‘Darkness,’ right? So it’s come to this, after all…”

Kaidou mutters that to himself, splits his chopsticks, and picks up some noodles. To think he’s hesitating now after having put on airs a few seconds earlier.

“The darkness is spreading inside my mouth… Hah! This is… This taste is…! This taste… It’s well… Eh… It’s average…”

Kaidou keeps eating his black magic ramen in complete silence. He seemed like he wanted to at least mutter something earlier, but now he has fallen completely silent. That’s the same as me, though, as he doesn’t stop eating either. Based on his expression, I can guess that it’s neither good nor bad, and it’s just a regular ramen.

Thinking about that, I direct my eyes towards Nendou’s large salt ramen.

Seems like “Hinoki Ramen” creates this irresistible urge that makes you keep eating… to some extent.

This might be my first time here, but I feel like I’m going to stuff myself with this ramen as much as I can. I had my serious doubts about it because

Nendou recommended it, but come to think of it, this is just a normal place. Its name, its appearance, and its furniture are normal. The employees are wearing some strange outfits, but the taste of the food is also normal. Oh well, in the end I ended up judging it for no reason.

I keep eating, and I direct my eyes towards the menu in front of me. Come to think of it, Nendou ordered this salt ramen for me. I never got to take a look at the menu.

Oh, I see.

After taking a look at the menu, I've finally come to understand the reason behind the employees' attires.

There were plenty of different dishes. From soy sauce ramen to miso ramen, pork cutlet ramen, and so on. There were all the basic ramen dishes. The salt ramen Nendou and I ordered even had a small sign next to it that read "This is our store's top recommendation!" However, all the dishes I've mentioned so far, also included the words "witch's" next to their names.

So that means that the ramen I've been eating so far is actually called "The witch's salt ramen?"

I guess that's why all the employees are dressed like that. Basically, this is just a maid café with a witch theme and ramen. Even though there was some masked guy in the kitchen, the store is still basically a witch café at its core. What can I say? I guess it's true that the ramen industry is pretty rough.

A regular store where the only thing that stands out are the employees' outfits. I guess it's not so bad. I keep stuffing my face with the ramen.

Moving on with the menu. All the items are prefaced by the word "witch's." "The witch's pork cutlet," "the witch's noodles," "the witch's wontons…"

Do these all taste completely average, without being good nor bad, just like the ramen?

I keep looking at the other items in the menu. This place really does have a large variety of ramen.

"The witch's mixed noodles," "the witch's instant ramen," "Adult Idol Watsuki Madoka's brand-new graduation album…"

Huh? That one was different.

What is this? Where did the witches go? More importantly, I feel like only this item isn't food.

I unconsciously point my finger towards the item on the menu.

Unlike the other dishes, the "graduation album" doesn't have a price written next to it. It just has the word "seasonal" written. What does this mean?

I can hear the excited voice of a female employee talking to me from the counter.

"Huh? Are you interested, onii-san? I can make that one cheap for you."

What's going on? Things are getting kind of scary…

"You know her? Watsuki Madoka is an extremely beautiful woman. Some pictures of her from her school days have surfaced here and there, so we just compiled them. What do you think? You want one? They're limited items."

That sounds expensive, though.

I think I've been caught in this store's cheating model.

Just kidding, though. "Those pictures" were actually just pictures of her face. So that means they've been just gathering pictures of her? However, what's with this girl? This place was just a completely average, not good, not great, ramen restaurant until just a few moments ago.

What in the world is going on?

I look at the woman's eyes. She's smiling, but her eyes are completely dark. And I don't mean black like the ramen, I mean that there's some darkness inside her. I had never seen pupils as pitch black as this woman's in all my life.

Besides, this girl…

I'm able to read her mind using my telepathy.

I see, so she comes from the same town as this adult idol or whatever.

And she has been making some underground profit with these for a while already. Well, I say underground, but it's right there on the menu.

However, what's scary about her is something else.

"I can sell them to you 50% off just for today! Feel free to buy some!"
(Give me money, cash, wealth…!)

This woman really only thinks about money.

It's the first time I've ever met anyone like that. Even politicians have other things in mind every now and then.

What's wrong with this place…?

As the woman keeps going on and on with her sales pitch, I take another look at the menu. Some text was conspicuously written at the bottom.

"Food consciousness campaign! Eat up your entire plate and you'll get 50 yen for free! Any plates with food left on them will cost up to 10,000 yen and an afternoon of dishwashing! Come on and eat!"

I see, so that's how it is.

No wait, 10,000 yen for any food left on the table…?!

"Sorry for the wait! Here's your large salt ramen."

"Eh? It's finally here."

A bowl about ten times larger than mine was placed in front of Nendou. Of course its contents were all the same, a soup with several different ingredients, and noodles. No wonder it took so long to prepare. Its size was enough to feed ten people.

Are you really going to eat all that, Nendou? If you don't, you'll have to pay 10,000 yen, you know?

I take a quick glance at him.

However, he simply looks at the ramen, completely unfazed by its size.

"I'm really starving. Maybe this won't be enough!"

Nendou notices me staring at him, and gives me a thumbs up with a smile.

"Partner, can you wait for me a little if you finish yours first? I really want to go bowling with you guys after I'm done with the ramen."

Ah right. You also talked about bowling in "Volume 0." Wait, are you going to die? Stop saying things that sound like death flags.

I keep looking at Nendou, who is now trying to cool the noodles before eating them.

And not long after that, I'm done with the ramen in front of me. It wasn't so much that I'd feel completely stuffed after eating it, but it still gave me a strange sensation.

Alright, Nendou, now's your turn to eat it up.

I'm concerned about him right now.

Nendou is looking up, completely unconscious, with noodles poking out of his mouth and nose….

Wait, Nendou?!

No wonder I thought he had gone silent a while ago. I can't believe he lost consciousness in that funny position, either.

"Huh? Dear guest, you weren't able to finish your dish, so you should pay the fine and go back to start washing some dishes! Why don't you ask your friends to come with you?" says the waitress while smiling wryly at Nendou's sorry condition, while looking at Kaidou and I.

How desperate is this woman for money…?!

She's so bad, she considers 50 yen a high-risk investment.

(TL Note: 50 yen is about 0.4 USD)

Besides, a 10,000 yen fine?! And she even intends to make us wash the dishes? They're going to make me work wearing that stupid costume and mask? That's no joke.

However…

Just like a machine, with the noodles still poking out of his nose and mouth, Nendou starts moving again. The chopsticks grab some more noodles, and he takes them to his mouth.

No complaints as long as he keeps eating, right?

Using my psychokinesis, I start operating the chopsticks in Nendou's hand, and I start packing his mouth with even more noodles.

witch's

witch's

witch's half-

witch's rice

witch's fried rice

witch's

witch's gyoza

witch's ramen

We don't serve cold

“Woah! Agh! Eek! Goh! Goh!”

Nendou seems like he wants to say something, but I keep shoving noodles into his mouth.

“I can’t believe he can still eat like that…!”

The waitress is looking at Nendou in complete shock. There’s no reason to panic. Noodles are still poking out of his nose and mouth, and his eyes are still completely lifeless. Your dear guest has now turned into a marionette whose only purpose is to stuff their mouth with as much food as humanly possible.

“Kugh! Ugh! Gack! Cough!”

Just a little more, Nendou. Do your best.

Keeping my cool, I take a sip of the water in front of me. I keep cramming noodles into Nendou’s mouth. Are you suffering, Nendou? You just need to hold on for a little longer. We’re doing is to combat this woman’s unhinged greed. Also, I don’t want to wash any dishes.

Good job. You ate it all.

“Ah… um… congratulations! You’ve earned 50 yen!”

The waitress fakes a smile as she hands Nendou the 50 yen prize. Of course, she’s in reality feeling frustration at not being able to get the 10,000 yen fee.

Good grief… Nendou’s recommended ramen restaurants can never be regular shops, after all…

I sigh discretely.

And then Nendou reacts:

“Eh? When did I eat it all, eh?”

He asks as his consciousness returns. With his stomach bloated like a balloon, and a noodle still poking out of his nose, he still is completely clueless. Good thing he’s an idiot.

Alright, we managed to escape washing the dishes and paying the fine, so we should leave this place as soon as possible.

I take out my wallet and prepare to pay the bill.

“Ha! Ha! It is finally time for darkness to come to me! Become one with my blood and flesh! Ha ha ha!!”

Kaidou was still eating.

Maybe he’s got a sensitive tongue, because he’s very dramatically trying to cool every single bite he takes.

The waitress then speaks to me again:

“So, are you buying the picture album or not?”

This again?

I keep listening to her long sales pitch, as I just wait for time to pass.

Saiki Kusuo's Interlude ❸

To be honest, we got lost before arriving at "Hinoki Ramen."

"Are we at the ramen place yet? Don't tell me that we're lost!"

"It's okay, don't worry! I'm leading you, after all. Besides, I have a clear reference in mind to find it."

Kaidou's starting to get impatient, considering we've walked past the same spot three times already.

However, Nendou doesn't realize that and simply talks about how nice the weather is, or any other inconsequential stuff like that. Besides, it's pretty cloudy today.

It's not sunny, but it's also not like the weather's terrible either. In any case, I just keep walking along with Kaidou and Nendou.

Then suddenly, Nendou stops dead in his tracks. He takes a quick look around him.

"But, eh? I can't find the cart salesman…"

I'm sure he just moved.

"Hey, you bastard, don't tell me that was your reference?! What are you thinking?! A cart salesman is obviously going to move, because it's a cart!"

"Eh? Did they move it…? Well, I also remember the empty soda can near the restaurant, and the businessman sitting next to it, so we're fine."

We're not fine.

In a very ominous way, the sky starts to get much darker. Seems like it's going to mimic our own situation for the time being.

"So, what was the place's name? Wouldn't it be better if we just asked someone from around here?"

"Its name…? I don't really remember."

You're not guiding us at all.

"What are you doing?! There's no way we're going to find the place like that!"

Kaidou starts ranting at Nendou, but he can only look around and ask.

“That’s strange. I don’t see the empty soda can anywhere either…”

He doesn’t know where we’re going, or the place’s name. And to make matters worse, I can’t even read his mind, so we can’t look for the store based on its appearance or name. My powers are of no use like this…

“I don’t see the businessman either… What happened here?!”

Nendou starts pacing around from place to place asking the same questions over and over again.

I take a deep breath.

Good grief, we might be walking around all day if we don’t know the location or the name of the restaurant. What do you say, Nendou? Maybe we should just call it a day for now. The weather’s starting to look dreary, and it might rain any time before sunset at this rate. I think it would be better to—

“Eh? There it is, partner!”

Seems like he finally found it.

“I finally saw the cart salesman!”

You found that?!

Nendou points to a cart with a sign that reads “Hasegawa Peach Tea.” The name of the story is written in huge letters. Are they specialized in just peach tea? Why put something like that in the name?

“That’s right, partner. You know ‘em? Their peach tea is super good!”

I never really expected to hear the words “peach tea” coming from your mouth in the first place.

“Eh? That’s right. I’ll go ask the owner!” says Nendou, as he runs towards the cart.

“Wait a second, partner! I’ll be right back and we’ll eat the best ramen ever.”

What are you talking about? We’re not going to eat anything, and I’m starting to get worried. I just want to go home already.

“Where is he even taking us…?” mutters Kaidou right next to me.

Nendou keeps talking about something with the salesman. It’s a pretty long conversation for just some directions.

After a while, Nendou comes back with two paper cups.

“Hey, want to try some, partner? This peach tea is very good.”

He offers one paper cup. Its contents spill a little. Nendou starts speaking happily as he takes a straw and puts it in his cup.

“*Sip! Sip!* This store is pretty famous because it used to *sip! Sip!* During the times of *sip!* Mania. And apparently he also took some auditions during the *sip! Sip! Sip!* Isn’t that amazing?! Eh, partner? *Sip! Slurp! Slurp!*”

Um… Nendou… what about the ramen place? Also, your drinking is getting too noisy.

“Hey, what about me…?” Kaidou asks Nendou, clearly enticed to try it.

“Eh?! I don’t care. I only have two hands, so I could only carry two cups!” says Nendou as he keeps noisily slurping from the bottom of the cup with the straw.

“Besides, why would I buy some for you anyway, eh?!”

Why did you buy one for me? Guess I’ll just pay later.

Kaidou pulls out his wallet with an annoyed expression and goes to the cart. His back looks pretty sorrowful as the sound of coins comes from the cart, and he buys his own cup.

I look at Kaidou from a distance, as Nendou keeps talking.

“And you know? This shop’s owner has struggled a lot. He has been unemployed for a long time, but finally he managed to make some money by selling peach tea. It almost makes me want to cry.”

So that’s the story of the peach tea salesman. Anyway, Nendou, what about the ramen place?

“More importantly, partner, why don’t you drink some? Eh? It’s really good!”

Wait, what about the ramen place?!

“Eh? Eh, this is bad. I forgot to ask him about the ramen place.”

What the hell did you do, then?!

“Alright, I’ll go back and ask again. You just drink that.”

Nendou runs towards Kaidou. Good grief, he went and bought some for me, but still managed to forget his main task at the moment. Nendou may be an idiot, but he’s a good guy…

Oh well.

I start drinking the peach tea Nendou bought for me. The taste of the sweet peach starts mixing in my mouth with the scent of the tea.

This is actually pretty good.

“I didn’t have many expectations because it was something Nendou recommended, but this is surprisingly good!” says Kaidou after returning, also enjoying the taste of the tea.

I finish my drink before I can even realize. Then Nendou returns with yet more paper cups. He gives one of them to me.

“How is it, partner? Bet it’s good, eh?”

It’s really good. I nod, and start drinking from the second cup. It’s so good I was thinking of getting another one anyway. Thank you. By the way, Nendou, what about the ramen place?

“Eh? Eh?! No good! I forgot!! I’ll go again!”

What did you do, then?

I drink my second cup, and then see Nendou come back after a while.

“Partner, I know the way! Partner!”

Nendou is shouting happily from across the street.

I see, finally we can get there.

But Nendou… what about those two paper cups in your hands? We’re going to be full of peach tea before we even get to the ramen restaurant.

Chapter 4 Tell us! The Jet-Black Wings

My name is the “Jet-Black Wings…” I used to work for the underground organization Dark Reunion as an A-Tier soldier. However, eventually I found out about their true objective, the “androidization of humanity,” and used the “Panalyze” mineral to travel between timelines. I finally arrived at my current world, and adopted the alias “Kaidou Shun.” I’m currently mixed in with a regular school life.

However, I know the Dark Reunion is already spreading its tentacles of evil in this world as well!

I’m sure their goal is to take over alternate realities where events go according to their plans, but I won’t let them!

As long as I, the Jet-Black Wings, am here, I won’t let you do as you please!

I remember my own past as I look out the window during class.

Sunlight is entering the classroom, painting it with its beautiful colors. My quiet classmate, Saiki, is paying attention to class silently. Everything’s peaceful. This is a scenario that I never would have been able to imagine a long time ago. My classmates are all ignorant to it. They don’t know the struggles of the battlefield. However, I think that’s how things should be. I don’t want my classmates to know the kind of world I come from.

I reprimand myself for thinking about that.

Perhaps I’ve been living in this world for far too long…

Are my emotions getting in the way? That’s no good. I need to be completely prepared for when the Dark Reunion strikes again.

“Hey! Kaidou, you’re not paying attention! Why don’t you come here and try to solve this hard problem, then?!”

The teacher calls my name. He’s angry, and striking the blackboard. I stand up and answer.

“Since we want to find the area of that shape, Mannaz, Ingwaz, Wunjo! We need to use the Pythagoras theorem first, and then Sine, Cosine, Tangent! Make the circumference 3. And now, forgive my English, we go whoosh! Whoop! Slap! And just like Ieyasu, Hidetada, Iemitsu, we take this and… Rarararararara!!”

(TL Note: Kaidou is for the most part just using words that sound cool to him. Mannaz, Ingwaz and Wunjo are names of Celtic runes; sine, cosine and tangent don’t have anything to do with what he’s doing, and Ieyasu, Hidetada, Iemitsu, are names of three famous shoguns from the Edo Period.)

“That’s… correct.”

“That’s my explanation…” I mutter, as I return quietly to my seat. I can feel the tension in the classroom.

“That was amazing! I can’t believe you solved that problem, Kaidou-kun!” Teruhashi-san whispers from her seat next to mine.

“*Oh!*-Of course. Something like this is nothing to me…”

That was a boring problem. However, I prefer peace to anything else. I look out the window once again as I keep thinking that. The teacher then starts talking about something related to the upcoming school festival.

“This year’s festival will no longer feature a performance by the Light Music Club.”

“Huh?! No way! Why?”

“I was looking forward to it…”

My classmates raise up their complaints about that.

“It’s unfortunate, but Takahashi, who was doing the lead vocals and guitar, suddenly got a cavity, and then sprained his toe. They’ve stopped rehearsing until they find a replacement.”

“That’s… hopeless…”

“It’s impossible. This year’s festival is over…”

The smiles fade from my classmates’ faces.

“No one can play guitar and sing like that…”

“Why doesn’t Kaidou-kun do it, then?” Teruhashi-san proposes me as a replacement. The class becomes noisy. Everyone is looking at me. My classmates are getting excited.

“That’s right, Kaidou! We have Kaidou!”

“Please, Kaidou! Only you can do this!”

My previously hopeless classmates light up, full of hope. I can’t refuse with everyone looking at me with such high expectations. Good grief, I admit that I’m pretty charming myself.

“Alright… Guess I’ll have to do it. Not to brag, but I’m pretty sure I can do it.”

“Thank you, Kaidou!”

“Please bring back your legendary band, ‘Dark Cerberus Hurricane’ at least for just one night!”

“Make this year’s festival legendary!”

My classmates start cheering me on. They get rowdy.

I look away, and catch Teruhashi-san grinning at me.

“Only you can return everybody’s smiles, Kaidou-kun.”

That’s right. I like my current life. I like a life where I can laugh with no concerns together with all my classmates.

I wish these peaceful days could last forever.

Suddenly, a terrorist walks into the classroom.

“Everyone, to the ground!” I shout. No, I shouted before even realizing it. The entire class freaks out.

“Mwahahaha! I’m going to kill you all!”

Gunshots start ringing around the classroom, and everyone screams. The windows shatter, however, all of my classmates start screaming at me for help. Apparently an entire terrorist organization is walking into the classroom.

I raise my voice, trying to protect Teruhashi-san and Saiki.

“What’s your problem, you bastards?! Why are you bursting into this school?! What’s your objective?!”

“Mwahaha! We don’t have one. We just love killing as many people as possible!”

“You evil fiends…”

“Drop dead like a bug!”

The terrorists hit Nendou with the back of their guns. Nendou screams in pain.

“Nendou! Stop it! Stop it!!”

No matter how much we scream, the terrorists keep attacking Nendou. Nendou crouches on the floor and covers his head.

Damn it. I need to step in. Defeating them will be extremely simple. However, if I do that, the entire class will find out that I possess extraordinary powers. I need to rely on this world’s law enforcement.

“Hee hee! Violence sure is fun! Heh heh! Let me tell you. Don’t expect the police to show up. The Dark Reunion has already taken over the police headquarters. Mwahaha! You can fall in despair, you morons!”

The class freaks out. Everyone feels hopeless while looking at the violent scene.

How ironic. No matter what world I’m in, the gods always leave us to our own…

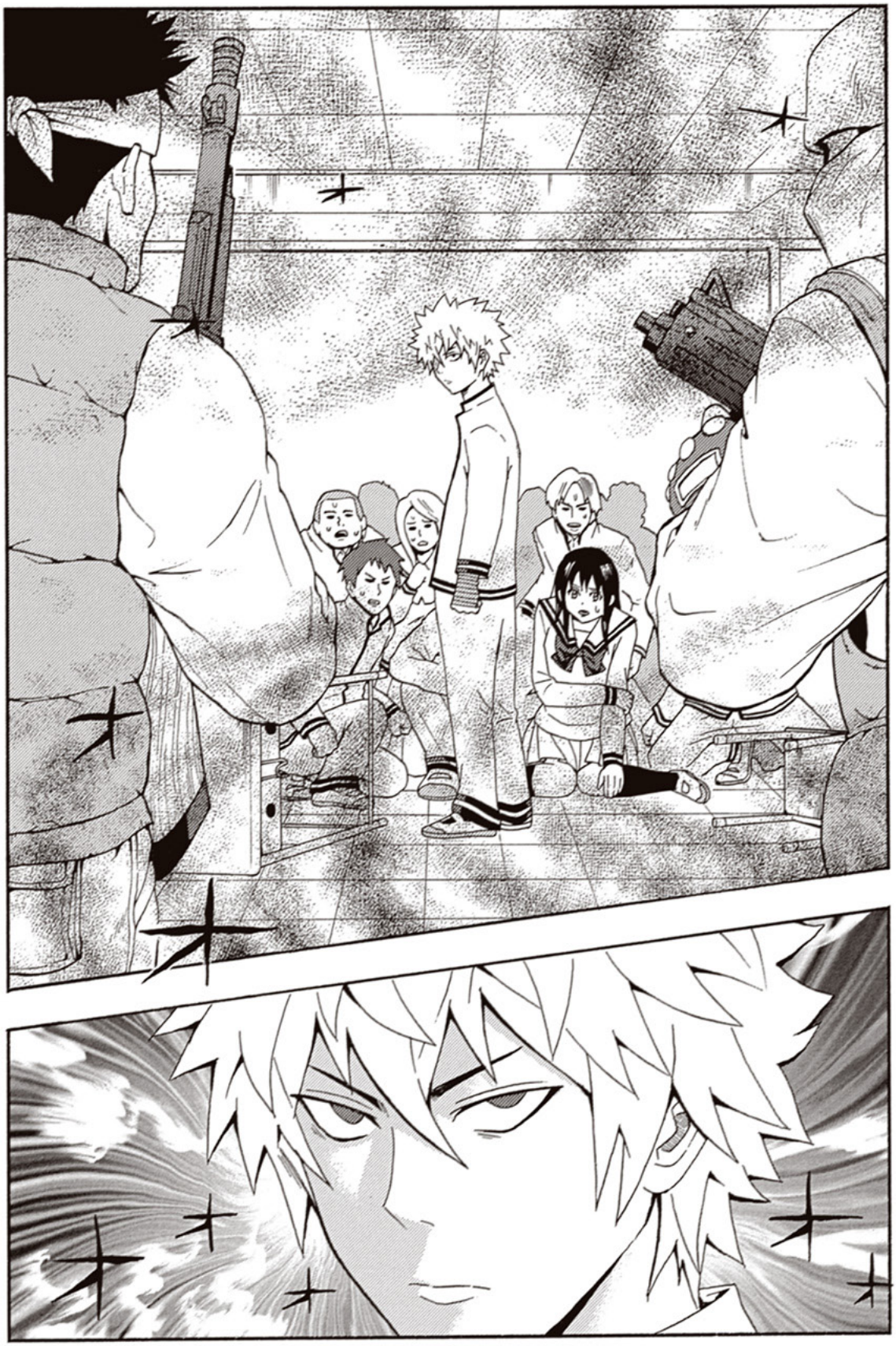
“You bastards… are with the organization?”

I stand up. While everyone’s freaking out, I keep my cool.

“Wh-What’s with this kid?!”

My aura immediately makes the terrorists fear for their lives.

That’s right. I have no time to worry. I can’t afford to look as they hurt Nendou…!



“Damn it! Shoot! Shoot! Kill him!”

The terrorists open fire all at once.

“It was just an afterimage…?”

However, it’s impossible to take me down with regular guns. I appear behind the terrorists, and use “Eiwaz,” the power that only I can use, to take them down one by one.

“I won’t have any mercy considering you’re with the organization!”

Suddenly, a flame appears in my right hand. The black fire causes them to panic.

“D-Don’t tell me… you’re the Jet-Black Wings?! You were alive?!”

The terrorist leader looks at me.

The class keeps freaking out.

“What did he say? Kaidou is the Jet-Black Wings?!”

“Kaidou… what in the world is that fire…?” Teruhashi-san looks at me.

“*Oh!* There’s no reason to be scared. I’d be just a regular human if I didn’t have these powers.”

I’m sorry, Teruhashi-san. I’m sorry, Saiki. I’m sorry, everyone. I’m not just a regular high school student. I’m different from all of you. I was chosen to wield these powers. To be honest, I come from a completely different world, and I thought I could only live here as a different person.

Well not anymore.

My flames envelop the terrorist leader, and start burning him.

“Thank you, Kaidou! Thank you!”

Everyone starts thanking me.

“E-Everyone. Does this mean that you accept me, even though I have these unusual powers?”

“Of course! You’re our friend!”

“You guys…”

I thought for a second that peace had returned to the classroom. However…

“Mwahaha! I’m glad I managed to get a teacher’s license and started working in this school…”

The teacher stands up from below one of the desks.

“I thought that you would eventually show yourself if I started a commotion… Jet-Black Wings!”

“Don’t tell me… you’re part of the organization as well?!”

The students scream in terror. The teacher has his face distorted in a twisted smile.

“Mwahaha! Kaidou, I never expected that you were the Jet-Black Wings…”

“Everyone, take cover! I’ll deal with him!”

I tell my classmates to hide, and face the teacher.

“Kaidou… No, Jet-Black Wings. I’ll take your head to the organization, and I’m sure I’ll be welcomed as a hero, with open arms… I’ll get a salary much higher than that of a measly teacher. So I need you to die right here! Mwahaha! Take a look at my power!”

“Violence Classroom.”

The air around me distorts itself. My classmates are screaming. The classroom is in complete chaos.

“Th-This is…! This power can’t just be explained by the regular laws of physics… You bastard! You’re a Tricker!”

The desks and the chairs start levitating, and raising towards the ceiling. However, I stand still, completely unmoved.

“So you were just a C-Tier soldier with levitation powers…” I mutter, and a smile appears on my face.

“Tremble in fear! My ‘Violence Classroom’ gives me control over everything in this classroom! I don’t fear you, Jet-Black Wings!”

“Do you know why people call me the Jet-Black Wings? Do you know what it means?”

“I don’t care about that. Now you can die!”

The teacher tries to attack me with a cutter. My classmates scream in fear. Their lives are in danger!

I stop everything completely.

“Oh, great force. Awaken from my right arm!”

I set the powers of my left arm's magicians, dragons, and fallen angels.

Ragz…! Ragz…! Ragz…!

"Look at the power of my right arm…!"

My Panalyze is shining brighter than ever.

"Burn, right arm!!"

Eiwaz!

My right arm begins moving on its own, as it lights up in flames. The flames grow larger, blinding everyone inside the classroom. Let me show you my true form!

My flames will chase you to death…!

"Aaaaghhh!!"

"How was it?! Did you like my true power?!"

My right arm's black flames keep producing smoke that finally resembles a pair of jet-black wings. I needed a darkness deeper and darker than anything else in the world to control this amazing power. These flames, my wings, dwell within me.

My classmates hold their breath in disbelief, looking at me.

"Th-This is the Jet-Black Wings… He's just like a fallen angel…"

"A fallen angel? No, he's the world's hero… White wings can only be tainted with the world's evil, after all. In order to save us, he has fought the Dark Reunion, and let darkness consume him. That's the Jet-Black Wings… No, that's Kaidou-kun!" Teruhashi-san seems to understand the situation.

"S-So this is the power of the Jet-Black Wings… I never expected that he had such an uncontrollable power…! Guh!"

An evil smile appears on the teacher's face as he keeps burning.

"Mwahaha… I think the organization already knows about you. You'll never be able to live peacefully again after defeating me…"

The classroom falls quiet.

"Ugh… Mwahaha… let me tell you something interesting. I'm the weakest Tricker within the organization! There are plenty of strong people who will be able to defeat you!"

“Wh-What did he say?!”

“No way…!”

The entire class is worried about me. A worried expression appears on Teruhashi’s face. However, I just watch him burn in silence.

“Ugh! It’s hot… I’m sure the next teachers will also follow my path directly… Don’t think you can rest at ease, you brats! You’ll barely have time for a break.”

The teacher vanishes completely from existence. I managed to be rid of our foe this time, by using my Jet-Black Wings. My power allows me to intertwine the past, the present, my previous world and this one.

However, I will always use this power to protect my friends. I’ll protect this world, and this peaceful life. I’ll use my powers for peace.

The flames vanish, and my right arm returns to its regular form. I’ve decided to fight the organization.

“Dark Reunion… I won’t let you do as you please!”

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Alright, first thing’s first:

Kaidou, please have some self-respect.

Second of all, in order to not confuse our readers, let me introduce myself. I’m Saiki Kusuo. I’m an esper. No, not an esper like the Jet-Black Wings over there. I’m a real esper.

As an esper, I have the ability to read people’s minds with telepathy. However scary that may sound, this has been my reality ever since I was born. If you’ve ever walked through a crowded place with many people, then you’ll probably know the feeling of ignoring most voices that don’t concern you. To me, this power is merely a voice that reaches my brain directly. There are voices I focus on, and voices I ignore. All you have to do is imagine that you’re in a place twice as crowded as the one you’re in at the moment. Being used to a power like may sound truly frightening, but in reality, you just learn to live with it. That’s what being used to something means.

However, I do still have some troubles because of this.

I get particularly upset when people are clearly trying to lie, while constantly thinking about the truth. For some reason, I’ll never get used to

that. It doesn't matter if it concerns me or not, just listening to people's thoughts and emotions can be really rough.

One more thing. Silent situations can be particularly uncomfortable to me. I'm sure you're bothered when someone's phone starts ringing, or when they start talking in a place that should be silent. Don't you think that it's rude how a single person breaks an entire atmosphere of silence and concentration? The same happens with thoughts. It's easy to ignore a crowd of multiple voices that blend together. However, it's much harder when all you can hear is a single voice in a quiet place.

At school, this happens in class frequently. Students are, for the most part, quiet in class. The one doing all the talking is the teacher. That's why sudden thoughts can be particularly annoying.

If it were some simple stuff like wanting to get something to drink right after the class ends, or having to go to the toilet and holding it in, or even counting down every single second until class ends, then I'd be able to let it go. But this class is completely different.

That's right. You've already witnessed one of those very instances. What you read earlier, was one of Kaidou's thoughts in class. It was just some fantasy of his.

I'm sure it was tough to read, right? I'm sorry about that. It was tough to hear for me as well. That was probably the first time you've witnessed it, right? I have to listen to Kaidou's delusions every day, at every hour of every school period, over and over again. It's always the same.

The only regular changes are whether he's in the classroom at the moment, or skipping school while sleeping on the school's rooftop.

Good grief, listening to the exact same fantasy every single time is pretty hard. I could stand it if at least some different developments happened every time. The worst part is that I think it could be polished and turned into at least a work of fiction or something.

The story is so cheesy, filled with a lack of realism, few mental images, and plot points that can be predicted from miles away, not to mention the ridiculous developments. Give me a break.

For example, why was the teacher writing answers that no students in the classroom were even qualified to answer, and why was Kaidou literally exclaiming "*oh!*" at the main heroine, Teruhashi, even inside the story?

Besides, apparently the power of "Violence Classroom" was only the ability to manipulate the environment, however it wasn't explained

properly. Also, why would someone with that kind of power attack Kaidou with just a cutter? And why would he say his power was the strongest, only to then mention he was the weakest in the organization? Really… give me a break. What am I? Your editor?

Besides, Kaidou, you had the entire class freak out far too many times. Give them a break, too.

However, this is a problem for me as well… I can't have him telling me the same plot class after class. The only one who poses a threat to me with his thoughts is Kaidou. Nendou is a threat in a different way.

What should I do, then?

As I listen to Kaidou activate his right arm power (inside his delusions, again), I look at the classroom. Takahashi is reading a manga behind his class textbook, and occasionally making sure no one's watching him. I blankly look at him, and suddenly an idea comes to mind.

I see, a manga… I just remembered something good.

———◆———

As the bell rings, after school, I walk to Kaidou so we'll go home together as always, but

"I'm sorry, Saiki. I have to work…!" he says, and then rushes out of the classroom.

"What's with him? Did he get a part-time job?"

Nendou then shows up and calls out to me, and the conversation shifts towards ramen somehow.

"Well then, partner, why don't we go to eat ramen together, then? Eh, partner? Where did you go?"

Nendou looks around him in confusion and starts looking for me, while asking "where are you, partner?" I consciously teleported right behind Kaidou.

Kaidou is at a bookstore in front of the station at the moment. Let me find out why…

(Why? For some reason I feel like I have to go to the bookstore today! It's almost as if someone was guiding me! What's going on…?)

I can hear Kaidou thinking that in front of me with my telepathy. We keep walking. Using my telepathy, I muttered the words “bookstore,” “library,” and “do you want to attain power” into his brain. I guess you could say it was subliminal. It’s something similar to the Angel Whisper I used a long time ago to guide the wallet thief that totally wasn’t Takahashi.

Kaidou walks into the bookstore. This time I whisper him to go into the recommended books section. I’m controlling him subliminally. As I do that, Kaidou looks at one book on the shelf.

(Wh-What’s this book about…? I found it by chance, but it looks kind of fun! This might be the choice of destiny! …I think I’ll buy it.)

Kaidou picks up several copies of the same book, all packed inside vinyl wrapping, and chooses the one that looks the cleanest out of them all. He then gives a satisfied look to himself, and walks towards other bookshelves.

Subliminal control means that I’m controlling him without him even noticing it. Besides, he doesn’t even realize that someone’s whispering at all. I’m sure this all seems like a coincidence to him.

I keep whispering other recommended manga to Kaidou. He picks them all up.

(How lucky! It seems like they have some pretty fun stuff today! God… Manga God… thank you for telling me what to buy.)

Unfortunately, the one whispering to you is not Tezuka-sensei, but just me, Saiki. But I am making sure that the manga you choose are actually fun. I just need to read them on the spot and make sure they're good works of fiction.

In the end, just as expected, what Kaidou is lacking are good references. He'll only be able to create stories as good as what he has already read, so I'll try to broaden his horizons a bit.

Preferably any manga authors that have inspired others Kaidou has already read. At least that way he'll be able to get better results.

The automatic doors open, and Kaidou walks out of the bookstore, having bought some new items. I follow him closely.

(What a good day! Can't wait to get back home and read these!)

Kaidou walks away from the store with a plastic bag full of newly bought manga.

(These manga look pretty fun. I have to show them to Saiki next time…!)

I watch Kaidou walk back home, as he thinks that.

Good grief… I hope his delusions turn a little better with that.

I'm looking forward to your next work, Kaidou.

———◆———

It looked like darkness was about to envelop the entire world… A strong sense of unease permeated the air. It felt like all humans on Earth were once angels that had been deprived of their own wings. I landed on this world and the first thing I saw was a faceless doll. Black smoke is raging beyond the horizon of reason. The twilight boundary. Causality all but certain, a world thrown into disarray, an instant of decision, the chains of control, a cracked cellphone. Suddenly, night falls. A never-ending corruption. A lifeless music box. The encroaching evil coming from the dark. Soybeans. Whose fault is this? Let me tell you my name: I'm the "Jet-Black Wings…"

———◆———

I'm sorry, Kaidou. It's… well… It's definitely not what I had imagined.

What do I do? I think it might actually be getting worse.

The next day, during class, I'm tormented by Kaidou's awful delusions.

I'm at a loss. I thought that his imagination would be different after buying so much manga, but it seems like he's been influenced by the environment and atmosphere far too much. I never thought it would turn out like that, though… It's so bad that I don't think you could actually rescue it. How did he change it so much in just one night…?

Cheesy expressions like "a rusty knife and a towering shadow" or "I'm sure you already know full well…" keep coming up in Kaidou's story. Why did it turn out like this?

I'm stumped at Kaidou's nonsensical story.

It's true that I thought he could learn some new sentences and tricks by reading more references, and perhaps create a more interesting concept, but references shouldn't have translated to simply more complicated words, and pretentious descriptions. Creating coherent and balanced stories with clear descriptions should have been the priority, rather than haphazardly inserting them without logic.Besides, Kaidou, why soybeans?

I'm not exactly sure whether Kaidou himself is meant to be good or evil within his own delusions. He's now moved on to explaining how the effects of humans have destroyed the environment of the planet and I really can't stand it anymore. That's enough. What Kaidou was lacking weren't just references. He was missing fundamental theory. What he needs to know if how to construct an entire satisfactory story.

Two more days of this, and I think I might go completely insane. I need to do something.

I need to make him realize…

And after thinking for a while, I finally come up with the answer.

I need a story that makes Kaidou understand the fundamental principles of storytelling. For example, a highly rated children's story. Just because it's for children, it doesn't mean that its plots are stupid, either. Universally good stories are for men, women, young and old, and will definitely have things everyone can enjoy.

There are definitely works out there that, although originally intended for children, can be appreciated by adults for their complexity and depth. A masterpiece doesn't necessarily have to use complicated words. A truly fun

story can be enjoyed by both adults and children. A masterpiece directed for children may be the best option right now.

After school, I'm completely worn out from listening to Kaidou's delusions all day long. I again control him subliminally.

(This again…! God of Manga, please guide me…!)

Kaidou stands up suddenly, and storms out of the classroom.

"I'm sorry Saiki… I'm in a hurry!"

I'm counting on you tomorrow, Kaidou.

And with hopeful spirits, I saw Kaidou walk away for today.

———◆———

I am a shadow warrior. I am a warrior that fights evil. The weather is nice today. But I can see the people from the organization there. I will give them a taste of my dark right arm power. I can't let you do as you please, because I am the Jet-Black Wings.

———◆———

I'm sorry, Kaidou. That's my fault. Please come back.

That's not what I meant by a book for children.

The next day, Kaidou's changed delusions fill my mind again. He took things in a completely unexpected direction once again. What's going on? There's no way.

I sigh in silence, while I try to ignore Kaidou's delusions that flood my brain. I appreciate that there are some variations here and there, but this is still unbearable.

Listening to this day after day would make me want to obliterate Kaidou after a while. Give me a break.

More importantly, why don't you pay attention to class for once? Please.

I tell him with my telepathy to pay attention. But for some reason this order doesn't work. I guess you can't change his true nature. I could only get him to buy manga because he likes manga in the first place, but I can't make him interested in something he has no reason to like, no matter how much I whisper in his mind.

What a problem. Kaidou, you're already a second-year student. University exams are coming up soon. We're going to be graduating in not so long, so you should start taking your education more seriously.

For example, look at Hairo. I can't see him well because of all the light behind him, but he seems to be sitting straight and paying attention.

I listen to Hairo's thoughts inside my head.

(I can do this! I can solve this! I'll solve it! More! I need more energy! I'll solve this for sure! I know this! I know it! That's good, that's good!! Woaaaaahhhh!!)

He sure has some incredible motivation.

However, even though he's being incredibly loud inside his own head, he's still paying attention in class. He's not just indulging in some nonsense delusions. Maybe you should learn from him, Kaidou.

Of course, this is just me thinking by myself. From the outside, both Kaidou and Hairo look equally focused.

However, even though Kaidou looks diligent writing on his notebook, neither the teacher nor my other classmates realize what he's truly thinking.

(Noon is for regular people… but I'm a night owl. I'm different…)

Good grief, he's started again. It's always kind of different, but in the end the story doesn't really change much. Kaidou, can you give me a break and just focus for once?

(I'm normally a regular guy that doesn't stand out much. However, in reality, I have a secret identity that no one knows. I may be wild and dandy, but I'm also a nice guy. You can call me the hard-boiled teacher.)

So it was the teacher?! Take your class seriously!

Good grief, it's hopeless if this is the kind of person teaching us.

I take another round trip listening to other people's thoughts, and it's not just Kaidou. No one seems to be paying much attention.

Takahashi has to pee.

(I-I can't hold it anymore…! At least let me teleport it somewhere else! Or make Nendou go to the bathroom instead of me!)

That's the kind of thoughts that I hear. It's all something like that. I'm not interested in any of that, though…

How ironic. Nendou looks the quietest to me, since I can't hear his thoughts.

I look at Nendou just to check up on him.

"Ah… I can still eat more… ah…"

So he's sleeping.

Then after a while he says "I can't eat anymore…"

The teacher notices Nendou sleeping and throws his chalk at him.

"Hey! Nendou! Pay attention!"

The chalk clearly hits Nendou on the head, but he doesn't even flinch. Instead, he mutters something about how that's not ramen, still half-asleep.

The entire class bursts out laughing at his comment. However, even after that, Nendou still doesn't seem to be reacting much. Just how much of a heavy sleeper is he?

"Come on, come on, quiet!"

The teacher claps his hands and heads towards Nendou. If a chalk projectile won't work, then maybe waking him up directly might. My classmates go silent, and pay attention to Nendou, who's still sleeping.

And then—

Nendou wakes up all of a sudden with a jump. A loud sound resonates throughout the classroom, as his legs hit his desk, and his face suddenly lights up.

"Eh? Eh…?"

He takes a look around as his sluggishness starts to wear off.

"So it was all a dream…"

He mutters. The class bursts laughing again.

"Nendou! You're sleeping in class!"

The teacher shouts at him. Nendou just replies "Eh?" still somewhat confused.

"Arghh… You! You're sleeping every day, every time in my class!! I can't take this anymore! I'll have you repeat the lesson a thousand times! Get ready!"

The teacher returns to his desk, his shoulders trembling with anger. Nendou mutters.

“The lesson? Just who was that old guy? Is he a transfer student?”

He’s the teacher.

I can’t tell if he’s completely awake, or if he’s still half-asleep, but I’m leaning towards the former.

The teacher stands in front of the blackboard, and raises his eyebrows as he takes a look at my other classmates.

“Let’s go back to class! You two, stay quiet! Come on… that Nendou is always interrupting my classes. He’s completely helpless.”

The teacher keeps complaining under his breath. To me, the quietest in the classroom was Nendou, though.

Class goes on, when I suddenly hear another loud voice coming from someone else.

(Ugh… I don’t want a story like this. Please! Manga God! Whisper into my ear one more time! Give me a story fitting for me, the Jet-Black Wings! Please…!)

Can’t you hear me? I’ve been telling you to take class seriously all this time.

Kaidou… You were quiet while the entire Nendou incident was taking place. Do you spend your time thinking by yourself? I don’t even know what the teacher expects when someone who looks as serious as you is just thinking about this kind of nonsense all day long.

(Please, Manga God! Just once! Lend me your power just this once!)

Good grief, how annoying. Well, taking the irresponsible title of Manga God isn’t my favorite idea, but I can help you at least write a more normal and easy-to-read story. If you’re not going to pay any attention, then at least do that.

I guide Kaidou subliminally one more time.

And then, all of a sudden:

(Huh?! Th-There it is! You guided me… thank you, Manga God!)

Kaidou’s delusions start flowing into my brain once again.

My name is the “Jet-Black Wings…” I used to work for the underground organization Dark Reunion as an A-Tier soldier. However, eventually I found out about their true objective, the “androidization of humanity,” and used the “Panalyze” mineral to travel between timelines. I finally arrived at my current world, and adopted the alias “Kaidou Shun.” I’m currently mixed in with a regular school life.

However, I know the Dark Reunion is already spreading its tentacles of evil in this world as well!

I’m sure their goal is to take over alternate realities where events go according to their plans, but I won’t let them!

As long as I, the Jet-Black Wings, am here, I won’t let you do as you please!

———◆———

My eyes sparkle with joy at Kaidou’s delusions.

That’s it, Kaidou! You can do it if you try! This is what I wanted! This technique of writing what you actually feel like writing instead of trying out different techniques definitely is the best! Wait, isn’t this the same as before?

And that took a whole week.

How ironic. Seems like I’m going to be hearing the story about how he uses Eiwaz with his right hand forever now… I don’t think I’ll ever get used to Kaidou’s nonsense, no matter how long I have to listen to it. Give me a break…

I shake my head, having lost all hope in Kaidou’s delusions ever changing for the best.

“Hey, Nendou! How many times do I have to tell you?! Pay attention!”

And yet, the only one getting shouted at is Nendou.

That’s truly ironic.

Saiki Kusuo's Interlude ❹

[Heterochromia Persona Cerberus Chapter 32]

"Woaaah! Here I go!!"

"Rasterize!!"

The light surrounds me. My left eye, known as the "Vision Mask" shows the true power of darkness.

"Wh-What's this light?! Woaaah!"

"The Judgement of Violent Father." Let your armor get rasterized!

I scrunch up my face at the requiem that I have to use in order to overcome the fiend. I sit down in this temporary world. My fresh wounds are still not hurting.

I never expected he would chase me this far, as the first member of the *Tanafi* known as *Razer Core*.

(TL Note: The names don't make sense in Japanese either.)

That damned Suvorov Smith Skywalker…

He was pretty tough.

I say after having transcended the Nihilist System into a non-materialistic body. However, the door of the end is still closed. I scowl at the Gear of Destiny, and curse the Oath of Punishment that I had to make.

However, if we are to call this destiny, then…!

I need to open my eyes further. I'm already prepared.

I look at the Silver Moon. I will be the one to stop the Mega Light of Destruction!

Bamoth of Darkness. Divine Power Hormone. Grant me your strength!

I remember the name of my old foes, now turned friends. Those two are not here anymore. They've already been rasterized from existence.

"All humans… are living while wearing a mask."

The Judgement of Violent Father opens its mouth as the armor disappears. I can't believe he has managed to surpass the limits of the Electric Frozen Time that I had cast!

And just like that, the Cronos Pons I had in my possession vanishes.

“Ugh…! You’ve become stronger, my son…”

In an instant, the moratorium disappears from this world.

That’s impossible.

I’m left speechless.

It can’t be. It can’t be. It can’t be. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No!!

“I’m Touru.”

“Nooooo!!”

It’s true.

My other self, Shadow Smith Skywalker whispers.

Vanish, you fiend!

I use the rasterize ability once more, to make the memories vanish from my soul.

But my father… is dead… He was defeated by the Artimet Artifact in Gigantism Tokyo and received deadly wounds.

However, if what he was saying is the truth, then surely Emperor Pavlov’s Confusion Beat Bang rasterized me and…

Now I don’t know what to do. Do I follow my sense of justice and rasterize everything?

The sudden rasterization causes my head to rasterize. But it’s not enough to rasterize it completely. Without even thinking about the rasterization ramifications, I continue rasterizing.

The moment that Suvalov, in a desperate attempt to rasterize me, attacked, I readied my body with Gehra, and a dark smoke formed behind me.

“Wh-Who are you?! Who the hell are you?!”

Suvalov looks at me with an astonished expression.

My face distorts in a wicked smile.

“My name is the Jet-Black Wings. You’re okay now that I’m here, Suvalov.”

The two darknesses blend together, and so a new story begins.

Good grief… I'm glad that you're giving writing new stories a shot, Kaidou. But it was a complete mess until the very end, and it has a ridiculous amount of specialized language, which makes it impossible to understand what's happening. In general, it's impossible to understand anything at all, really. It's probably the most confusing one you've done so far.

More importantly, I've never heard of this manga, but you said this was episode 32 already. Which means that this is serialized and relatively popular. Is Shonen Jump okay with this?

Well, never mind that, I guess I'll have to listen to your delusions in class just like every day.

Good grief, give me a rasterize…

Oh, looks like I was still caught up in his fantasy world.

Chapter 5 Avoid it! The Worst Ending

My name is Saiki Kusuo. I'm an esper.

I'm sure some of you are tired of me doing the same introduction every single chapter, but I'd like you to just accept it. I have to do it so you'll be contextualized. Especially now that we have no images.

Well then, like I was saying, I can do basically anything with my powers. I'm as close as you can get to invincible.

For example, I can avoid being run over by a car with ease, and I can just erase viruses from my body before I get infected. Even in the worst-case scenario where a meteorite falls on Earth, I can just stop it and throw it back to space. And in an even worse case scenario where an editor decides to take us off the Shonen Jump, I can just come back to haunt him as an after image, and give him a smack from behind the scenes.

Well, I can't really do that last one. It goes without saying, but I have to explicitly state that I won't pursue that path.

In any case, it's almost impossible to hurt me. As long as I have precognition and psychokinesis, I can pretty much react to any incident that comes my way.

To summarize, it's a great benefit to my own health that I'm an esper. However, I have one big problem.

It will become really troublesome if it keeps going like that.

This morning, I remembered when I looked at the calendar.

I'm going to have to take a day off.

At least that's what I'm thinking.

I try my best not to stand out in school. Which is why I try to avoid being early or late. Mostly because it attracts negative attention. However, if I'm a perfect record student that always gets there on time, that also becomes a problem.

That's because of the perfect record award.

It's an award given to a student that's never late, never skips school and never leaves early. The award is given publicly. Awards like that are probably done differently depending on region and school, but at PK Academy, the award is very strictly only given to students who never miss a day of school.

Therefore, getting the award means getting noticed by a lot of people, which is the exact thing I want to avoid. Actually, I'm not even sure it

would be a lot of people, but even being noticed by one single person would be annoying. Besides, the award ceremony is carried out in front of the entire school. Being called by the principal at the gym and having to reply, stand up and walk in front of everyone else sounds awful. There's no way I'd ever do something like that. Besides, sometimes even parents show up at those ceremonies in PK Academy. Please give me a break.

My objective is to avoid being excellent or deficient.

I try to place third in five-people races. That's my position. Coming in first is out of the question, and second is no good either. I don't want people to cheer me on, but I also don't want them to make fun of me. I just want to do everything without standing out and live a quiet life. Being known as a lazy student is also inconvenient, and being known as a prodigy student is troublesome as well.

This might be an exaggeration on my part, but I also try to avoid standing out for being too normal. So I'm skipping school today to avoid getting the perfect record award.

I take a quick glance at today's schedule. I have no important homework for today, no quizzes, and I'm not on cleaning duty either.

Alright, today's the perfect day.

The best days for me to take a break are days when nothing especially good or bad is going to happen.

Pyrokinesis: in other words, the ability to control fire. It's a power that could even get strong enough to make flames appear from your hand. Of course, a certain Jet-Black Wings I know would be thrilled to have it, but I'm going to use it for something different.

Using my powers, I can raise my own temperature and make it seem like I've caught a cold. It's kind of hard to control, but after a while I eventually find the perfect temperature. I can't openly admit that I'm not going to school only to avoid receiving the award. I'm sure my mom would get mad at me for that.

Being able to skip school without any consequences, I just lie in my bed, looking at the same old ceiling as always. First period has probably already started.

I'm going to stay at home all day, so that I can properly pretend that I got sick.

It's so quiet. Quieter than when I'm walking around the city, or than when I'm at school.

I take a deep breath, and close my eyes.

The amount of thoughts that I can hear at home is a lot smaller than at school. There's no limit to how many people's thoughts I can hear daily with my telepathy. But at home all I can hear is the sound of cars passing by occasionally. Since I can't turn it on or off, this is truly peaceful and perfect for taking a break.

(Agh! I stepped on some poop!)

Well, I can hear the thoughts of pedestrians outside and some of my neighbors every now and then.

(Eh?! I stepped on another one! Damn it, one with each foot!)

This guy seems to be having the worst luck ever today.

"Those damned owners! At least take the time to pick your pet's feces! Damn it!"

I hear his actual voice coming from outside the window. Good grief… how annoying. I move my sight to the window, still half asleep, and look at the curtains being moved by the breeze.

Oh, the window was open?

I opened it to let some air flow into the house, but forgot to close it later.

I close the window and lock it, just in case. I can do all this still lying in bed, just like I can turn off the lights as well.

It's still a big upside, even though I have to hear people think about stepping on poop and whatnot.

Thinking about that, I start dozing off.

"Heat up! Come on, do it! Burn, burn!!"

I was dreaming. For some reason I couldn't see his face well because of the light, but Hairo was there, too. Maybe it's because I'm feeling guilty for skipping school, but it was a strange dream where Hairo was waving a tennis racket, for some reason.

I open my eyes, feeling warm, and having some trouble breathing. For some reason the room looks brighter than usual… No, that's not it. This is—

I jump out of the bed. One side of the room is burning.

My bookshelf has completely collapsed because of the fire, and the floor and walls are on fire as well. Even the bed is starting to get burnt. This is bad. I try running out of the room, but I can't breathe. I can't see anything. I try to move forward anyway, and eventually I reach the door. I gasp for air after touching the doorknob. It seems like it got hot because of the fire, and now I don't know whether my mind has gone numb, or whether that feeling right now was pain. Did I just burn myself? This is the first time I've ever suffered a burn before. I somehow manage to bring the door down with my body, as it falls on the floor, which is also on fire, just like the stairs and the first floor. Everything's on fire.

I try to keep my body as low as possible, trying not to breathe in any smoke.

I can't breathe. I need to go outside!

I get ready to teleport myself outside, but—

I can't use my powers?!

I'm surrounded by the floor's smoke and fire again.

Why? Why can't I use them now? Come to think of it, I can't hear the thoughts of people outside anymore either. I can't hear anyone's thoughts. Even after trying to take out the fire with a swift movement of my hand, nothing happens. I try using my x-ray vision, or my clairvoyance, but I can't see anything. I'm all alone in the middle of a raging fire. I can't hear anyone's thoughts, even though I should, and I can't see anyone's face no matter how hard I try. I'm struck by a terrible feeling of solitude. Almost as if I were the only person left in the entire world. I'm surrounded by the fire. I need to survive. I always thought psychic powers weren't that big of a deal. But losing them at a moment like this…

Am I going to die here?

Am I going to die without ever getting my powers back?

No, that's not it. This is a dream.

I open my eyes, startled.

I sit on the bed and look around the room. Of course, there's no fire anywhere. Nothing at all has changed since last time. My bookshelf's still there, just like always, my television, and my plants, and of course cleft chin Nendou Riki and the Jet-Black Wings, Kaidou Shun, as well…

Why are you here?!

"Eh? Finally woke up, partner? We heard that you caught a cold."

"Are you okay, Saiki?"

For some reason the two of them are inside my room.

Nendou and Kaidou… when did you get here? How did you come in? Through the ventilation ducts, through the pipelines, through the window? Was it the window? I'm sure I locked it earlier…

I'm sure I'm making a pained expression. Nendou looks at me and answers.

"If you're confused, your mom invited us in. She told us to come to your room."

Why did she do that?

"Also, she told us to look after you since she was going shopping."

Why did she do that?

So basically, we're the only ones inside this house. And I'm supposed to pretend that I've caught a cold and that I was sleeping. This is the worst. It's even worse than those Mayan predictions about the world coming to an end.

I unconsciously screw my face as I feel a throbbing pain in my head.

"You should get some rest." says Kaidou, while I remember the dream I just had.

My head hurts. Did I predict the future?

Whenever I sleep and then immediately get a headache, it means that I've just used my precognition. Just like with other powers, I can't just turn my precognition on and off. And it's not like I can just pick any moment in the future and know what will happen. Precognition suddenly comes at random and shows me events that will happen. It's usually completely useless stuff, but this time it seems like something serious.

In my vision, I didn't suddenly lose my powers, but I was always like that. If that were to become reality, then we might as well rename the manga to "The Disastrous Life of Powerless Saiki K.," without the Ψ, which was just

a very geeky idea by the author, that I've just had to learn to deal with week after week when we're published on Shonen Jump. What a scary thought, though. I think we'd have to change the genre to psychological horror.

However, the real problem isn't that, and neither is it the fact that I saw Hairo in my dream, but that this place is going to catch fire. There's no doubt that a fire that size would burn the entire house to the ground.

My dream predictions are always 100% correct. This house will burn in the near future. However, I could only see what happens afterward, so I don't know the cause. Well, I do see two potential causes right in front of me, considering Nendou is just an idiot, and the Jet-Black Wings Kaidou is obsessed with things that catch on fire. Though since they obviously didn't just come here to set things on fire, it's still impossible to know what the cause will be. I can change the future slightly. All I have to do is find the fire while it's still contained, and put it out before it goes out of control.

Good grief… what a bother.

"Eh? Right, we brought you something," says Nendou as he brings out something. What?! Don't tell me this is the cause of the fire! I carefully look at Nendou's hands.

However, unlike what I expected, it's just a manga volume.

"You're free anyway, right? It's the first volume of Shinseiki."

"Shinseiki?" I had never heard of it.

I take it and look at its long title "Shinseiki Idol Densetsu: Kanata Seven Change." I see. I definitely had never even heard of this manga. Well, I kind of get the feeling that someone I know bought it at some point. Also, Nendou said "first volume" but this is more like the "only volume." Who's the author? I see. Okay, well, I guess I'll try reading it eventually.

(TL Note: "Shinseiki Idol Densetsu: Kanata Seven Change" is a real manga, written by the same author of Saiki K.)

In any case, this doesn't have anything to do with the fire.

But now Kaidou pulls something out of his pocket.

"Saiki, want to play a game? I'm sure you're free, anyway, so I brought this to you!"

Kaidou had a memory card in his hands.

"It's loaded with a copy of Wonder Adventure's Plasma Warrior. You can even enter the hidden dungeons."

That's a game that I've never heard of, but I still take his useless present. Well, I still thank him for the memory card. I might be able to use it eventually.

But this is still not it.

I closely examine the memory card time and time again. There's nothing special about it, other than data. How will the house burn down, then? I don't have this Wonder whatever device at home. But it also doesn't feel like anything will explode if the three of us try to play it together. I hope not, at least.

I keep thinking about the possible cause of the fire.

"What's wrong Saiki? Are you still sick?" Kaidou asks with a grimace. This is bad, I don't think I can examine this memory card anymore.

"That's it! I also brought something useful. Here's a mask, considering you caught a cold."

Kaidou looks in his bag for a while and takes the mask out.

"Here it is. The 'Monster Destroyer' mask that I saw at the pharmacy."

Here's the face mask that's completely useless for my current situation.

I'm sure they were selling it as a party item, anyway. It's just like those horse masks that were popular a few years ago.

Good grief, what a useless item. Who would ever wear this?

I closely look at the mask Kaidou gave me. It's the kind of product you buy only once in your life.

"Pretty cool, huh? I bought it to match mine."

Kaidou's eyes shine with excitement as he takes out a similar but different colored mask from his bag. Seems like I found the guy that will buy more than one of these.

This is also completely unrelated to the fire.

I hold the mask as I keep thinking. My prediction will come true no matter what. And it has to happen in the near future. Most likely today. However, I really can't see what the cause could possibly be.

"Eh? This is amazing!"

Nendou takes the mask away from me, and before I realize it, he's already wearing it. Good grief, it really is dangerous having him around without knowing what he's thinking.

"Hey, you bastard, I bought that for Saiki!"

Kaidou extends his hand and demands that Nendou return the mask. Nendou just holds it up high so he won't reach. Then, almost as if laughing at Kaidou for being short, Nendou puts the mask on.

"Give it back! Ugh… I can't reach!"

"Eh? It's pretty dark and calm in here!"

Nendou is pretty buff, so he really does look like a minotaur with this horse-like monster mask on. Upon a closer look at it, the mask is actually pretty similar to Nendou's regular face. Maybe it's because the mask is very well crafted, or simply because Nendou's real face already looks pretty close to a Monster Destroyer. It's bizarrely close to his real face.

I look at him, and eventually we look at each other. Or did we? In any case, the horse-like monster face is looking at me.

"Hey, partner. Aren't you hungry?"

Okay, seems like he's back to this already. And now that he mentions it, I realize I am indeed hungry. Come to think of it, I haven't eaten any proper food all day. I've just been sleeping.

"Alright, then wait here, partner! I'll go prepare some good ramen for you! You can't get better if you don't eat!"

The bizarre creature with Nendou's body and the Monster Destroyer head dashes out of the room. Kaidou follows him.

"W-Wait! The mask… Saiki, I'll go help Nendou. I'll make sure he doesn't do anything stupid, so you just rest. Sleeping is key when recovering from a cold."

Sorry for all this trouble, Kaidou.

I appreciate Kaidou's good intentions, but there's no way I can sleep in this situation. Oh well… looks like the cause was you guys after all. I just confirmed the dream I had.

I use my x-ray vision to look at Nendou and Kaidou in the kitchen.

It doesn't mean I can't do anything just because I'm supposed to be in bed. If I let these two do as they please, I'll be enjoying their delicious ramen in heaven tomorrow. I need to control them somehow.

In the kitchen, they're getting everything ready.

Kaidou is taking some bowls, and Nendou takes out some prepackaged ramen from his bag.

"Alright, time to prepare some good ramen!"

Nendou is getting fired up. I can't help but feel worried. More importantly, that mask on his face makes him look like a complete monster. No, that's not quite right. It makes him look like a complete Monster Destroyer. However, just one look at Nendou's huge hands makes me think that he must be awful at cooking.

Ignoring my concerns, Nendou rinses the pot with water, and then fills it up to start boiling it. Can he even see what's in front of him with that mask on?

I look at the stove turn on, and then call it.

This must be what causes the fire. Nendou starts reading the instructions on the back of the package while the water boils. Can he even read what's in front of him with that mask on? I'm worried.

He mutters something from inside the mask.

"I can just do this by feeling, right? Eh?"

This is bad! Nendou is definitely not suited for cooking!

Kaidou, who's much more careful and delicate than Nendou, should be the one taking care of this. Please, Kaidou. Don't let Nendou cook.

I plead for Kaidou's help. But Kaidou is just making funny faces while looking at his reflection in the knife he's holding.

This is bad! Kaidou is also incompetent in his own way!

“Ha! Ha! Ha! It’s been a long time since I’ve fought some small fries like you!” he says while he flimsily holds some uncut onions in his other hand. He starts spinning the onions around, and lightly rubs his finger against the kitchen knife’s blade. The entire scene is far too dangerous, and I can’t watch.

Maybe he’s a master of the knife?

Kaidou finishes cutting the onions, and just as expected, they’re a complete mess, still attached in several parts.

“You’re not cutting them, eh?”

“When you reach my mastery level, just cutting them regularly is not enough.”

What are you even talking about?

He then clumsily starts throwing the onions into the water, and Nendou complains.

“Those onions won’t work like that!”

His voice coming out of the mask. He then forcibly takes the onions from Kaidou’s hand. Destroy Onion Monster… for some reason that phrase comes to mind.

“Damn it. Cut them properly…”

He starts muttering, while his mask’s expression remains completely unchanged, and then begins cutting the onions. Looking useless, Kaidou also begins muttering some complaints under his breath, and looks for something else to do.

“Alright then… in that case, I’ll take care of the eggs. Eggs are nutritious and delicious. Oh… the shell… No way… The shell fell in…?! Is this what they call fate…?!”

Please, Kaidou, give fate a break.

I wearily watch the shell get mixed with the egg white.

“The shell’s still there! Damn it, do it properly…”

Once again, Nendou takes the plate and the eggs from Kaidou, and starts separating the egg and the shell with some chopsticks.

I take a look at the nightmarish sight of a horse-like Monster Destroyer standing in my kitchen, the mask dangling all over the place, as he starts taking care of all the cooking.

“Eh? Seems like it’s finally boiling!”

Nendou starts mixing the noodles with his chopsticks, and stirring them around the bowl, looking clearly satisfied with himself. He then throws the egg inside. Then, for some reason, he starts throwing every single condiment he can find in there, one after the other.

What are you doing, Nendou? Kaidou, stop that self-proclaimed professional chef! Hey, wait! Why are you adding curry as well? What are you trying to prepare here?! Are you really preparing ramen?

After adding as many condiments as were humanly possible, Nendou takes off the mask, and wipes off the sweat. He then carelessly leaves the mask right next to the fire.

“Whew… It’s hot… Eh? I can finally see in front of me!”

So you weren’t seeing anything…

Now that you can see, at least take a look at what you dare call ramen right in front of you… Though I guess it’s too late to even call it that anymore.

“Eh? What the hell is this?! Smoke is coming from the mask!”

“You idiot! What did you do?! What’s with this smoke?! Ugh! My eyes!”

The mask Nendou took off has caught on fire. Smoke keeps towering over the mask and raising towards the ceiling. Nendou and Kaidou start crying in pain, as smoke enters their eyes and surrounds them. I see, so this is how it starts.

This is the moment that my precognition predicted.

Here it is. This is the cause of the fire.

I open my eyes wide. In an instant, I find myself in front of the fire that was rapidly spreading, and I slow it down and extinguish it. Now I should turn on the extraction fan. I reach the switch with my finger and turn it on. Fortunately, the two were panicking so they didn’t see me doing any of that.

Once the smoke is out of the kitchen, the two finally calm down, and pick up the mask.

“How lucky. It only burnt a little.”

“That was dangerous. Today is windy, so we have to be careful with fire.”

Though you were the one that started it in the first place.

In any case, with this, I've finally cleared that prediction.

I managed to change the future. It should be fine now.

I look at Kaidou and Nendou getting back to cooking with my x-ray vision and predict yet another ominous scenario.

And a few moments later—

I hear a knock on the door, and my prediction becomes reality. The… ramen-like thing that Nendou and Kaidou prepared is placed in front of me.

"Eat up, partner! It's delicious!"

You at least tried it, right?

"Saiki, you might not be hungry, but you have to at least force yourself to eat something, or you won't get better!"

Kaidou… actually I am hungry. I am, but…

I take the chopsticks in my hand and take a careful look at the bowl in front of me.

It looks surprisingly normal, though. It's served in a neat, little bowl that's actually quite charming. However, its appearance in contrast with their displayed cooking skills just gives it an eerie feeling. I might actually fall sick if I end up eating this. That's a consequence that even a non-esper would easily predict. They say that food will generally taste as good as it looks. But if I eat this, then I might end up dying and fulfilling the prophecy I saw in my dream.

I can't eat this…

I look at it, and my face instinctively reacts.

Nendou and Kaidou are looking at me, expectant. They tried their best. Even though they just had to prepare a simple instant ramen, the onions, the egg, and then the fire all caused them a lot of trouble.

They don't know it, but I saw it all with my x-ray vision.

Ugh… There's no other way…!

I brace myself and take a tiny sip.

My heart is racing as I put the spoon in my mouth, and then eat it. Nendou and Kaidou look at each other relieved that I've started eating.

The chopsticks in my hand immediately start trembling.

“What do you think, partner? Pretty good, huh?”

“What’s wrong, Saiki? Does it taste bad?”

My entire body is shaking. And it’s not shaking because the ramen tastes bad, or because there’s some raw meat mixed in with it.

It’s just…

No way…

It actually tastes pretty average. The ramen in front of me tastes just like it looks: average.

Nendou… can you actually really cook?

I shudder as I realize the shocking truth.

I never imagined that at least Nendou’s tongue wasn’t completely stupid. I always just assumed all of him was stupid, but this is a nice surprise.

Come to think of it… the one who messed up the onions and the egg was Kaidou. In comparison, Nendou was actually considerably competent.

I’m even more shocked than I was by the fire.

I think about it as I keep eating. And yet, I’m struck by a strange feeling.

Wait a minute… this is strange. For some reason I can’t calm down.

I keep drinking the soup.

I predicted the fire in my dreams.

My predictions are absolute, and we averted the crisis earlier… Then, why…? Why do I still feel uneasy? Was that really enough to fulfill the prediction? Can I just assume that Monster Destroyer mask was enough?

Maybe I haven’t reached the moment where the fire actually starts.

I look at the ramen, deep in thought.

Does this mean there’s still something else…?

“Eh, partner. There’s plenty more for seconds, so eat up.”

So there’s still some ramen left…

Seems like I was completely underestimating Nendou’s abilities. I never thought he would even prepare enough for seconds. However, if it really is true that we haven’t reached the fire yet, then I can’t let Kaidou and Nendou stay here any longer.

Nendou will definitely try to carry me to safety, and probably Kaidou as well, recklessly trying to save us all. It doesn't take any precognition to assume that's how it will go down.

As for Kaidou, he always forgets to stay in character in moments like that. And I'm sure that he would put my safety over his if something happened. It's precisely because Kaidou is a good guy, that situations like these are particularly dangerous.

That's why I can't get them involved any further.

Making them stay would be wrong.

I feel kind of bad saying it after they've prepared me a meal, but I need them to leave.

I leave my chopsticks to the side and get ready to tell them to go. I can deal with a fire no problem, if I'm by myself.

If only I could get them to leave before that…

But would that be okay, though? Am I really okay with that?

Ugh…

I feel another throbbing pain in my head. And then in an instant, I see countless images flash in front of my eyes.

I see, so that's how it is. I never imagined this was the way to prevent the fire.

I take my chopsticks in my hand again and keep eating.

I may have eaten too much.

I stay in place, feeling completely stuffed. I kept eating one ramen bowl after the other, until I couldn't even move anymore.

This is bad… I'm feeling genuinely sick.

I'm lying down in bed.

"Eh? Partner? What's wrong?"

"I'm sure he's just tired. We've helped enough. I think it's time we go home."

Kaidou places a blanket over my motionless body and puts the mask that Nendou had been wearing until just recently over my face.

Why am I getting tortured?

“See you tomorrow at school, partner!”

“Saiki! Get well soon!”

The two say, as they shut the door slowly and leave my room.

I can hear them walking on the floor as I turn around and feel slightly relieved. I take the Monster Destroyer mask off my face and sigh quietly.

Good grief… finally some peace.

Still…

I never expected Nendou and Kaidou to show up. No one from elementary school or middle school ever visited me.

I hear the front door open and then close. They went home.

Then I hear Nendou’s ridiculously loud voice coming from just outside the window.

“Eh? Did I just step on something?”

I also never expected that eating up all the ramen was the way to avert the fire.

I lie in my dark bedroom as I listen to Nendou’s conversation with Kaidou.

“Is that a cigarette butt? Who would throw one out in a place like this?”

“We can’t just pretend it’s not there… maybe we should look for a trash can and throw it out.”

And so, they walk away.

The cause of the fire was the cigarette butt that Nendou just stepped on all along. If Nendou hadn’t stepped on it, then my house would’ve caught on fire.

You might think that’s a stupid cause, but that’s how easy it is to change the future. By eating up all the ramen they prepared, Nendou would take a little longer to leave. And then, by chance, he’d end up stepping on the cigarette butt. A cigarette butt that, otherwise, would’ve been blown by the wind into my house and eventually create a fire. Now there won’t be any fire. I’ve avoided a terrible future.

Despite being always so unpredictable, Nendou managed to behave exactly as planned this time.

Their two voices start sounding distant, and then I hear complete silence.

I look at the empty bowl inside the room. The sound of the clock that I'm used to sounds a lot louder than usual for some reason. Maybe it's because Nendou and Kaidou were here just moments ago, but my room now seems incredibly quiet and spacious. Maybe even a little chilly.

No, wait a minute.

What's this? Don't tell me I'm actually feeling lonely? No, there's no way. Absolutely no way. I'm happy that those noisy idiots finally left. In fact, I'm thrilled to finally get to have some peace and quiet. That's how I've always been. When I was in elementary school and in middle school, I always preferred peace and quiet. That's how I chose to be. On my own accord.

However, here's a pretty interesting thought.

It might sound strange, but just the fact of letting Kaidou and Nendou stay for a little longer, having them cook for me, and then go home, managed to change the entire future.

The future really does change massively even with the smallest changes. Then that must mean that just meeting Kaidou and Nendou has also changed my future dramatically. And it will keep changing from now on…

If I hadn't been placed in the same class as those two, then we would've never met, and they wouldn't have visited today.

I think about it and start feeling uneasy yet again. Why am I feeling uneasy? I'm sure I managed to avert the fire, but I'm still not calm at all. What am I feeling? This is something different.

I keep coming up with different words to describe it as I lie in my dark room, but I can't find anything convincing.

Damn it, the only one I can think of is that I feel lonely. *I feel lonely.*

I turn around over the bed over and over as I mull it over. But no matter how many times I turn around, I still feel uneasy.

Good grief… I know I said how not being able to turn my telepathy on and off can get annoying, but at least it does help me organize my own thoughts better.

When I think about that, I realize that I wouldn't want anyone hearing what I'm thinking right now out of pure embarrassment. And especially if Nendou and Kaidou heard this, I think I'd get so embarrassed I could die.

I'm really glad no one can hear my thoughts.

Huh? What's that? A reader?

Come to think of it, you've been reading this entire text all this time.

But that's okay.

Even readers can't really know what I'm thinking. I'm sure you don't know what this uneasy feeling I'm referring to is. There's no way for you to tell what I'm feeling, when I don't even know what it is. There's absolutely no way.

Those of you reading this aren't espers, after all.

I point my finger towards the switch, and turn my room's light on.

I'm an esper. This is second nature to me. It's about to get dark soon.

In the illuminated room, I quietly open a manga.

Afterword

How was the novel adaptation of "The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.?" When I first heard about the novelization, I doubted the sanity of the editorial department.

Even if the content of the novel was interesting, I was constantly worried during production, thinking who would buy a novelization of an unknown series, let alone a gag manga.

In the end, those concerns remain unresolved, but if there are people reading this passage now, it's probably fine… I hope.

Well, I know I'm being self-deprecating, but I think the content turned out really well!

And that's all thanks to Hinata-sensei, who thoroughly understood my manga by reading all of my previous works and wrote a wonderful novel!

It was a valuable experience for me to see my manga characters as a reader!

In the midst of the demanding schedule of weekly serialization, I worked hard while also doing the simultaneous release of this novel and drawing the cover, pin-up, and illustrations for it. At first, I couldn't help but doubt the sanity of the editorial department, but as I progressed, my doubts transformed into confidence… Although I did cry when I was asked to draw a second color page, so I took a little break to escape from it.

I sincerely thank Hinata-sensei for adapting this unstable manga into a novel and everyone who has read it so far.

—Asou Shuuichi

Kukuku… You still haven't realized? It is I, the "Dark Sunshine."

Or perhaps it would be easier to understand if I called myself the "Unsetting Sun…?"

Fufu, you don't know… I see… You still haven't awakened?

There's no helping it. Then let me take on a temporary name to conceal my true identity.

Yes, it is I, "Hinata Shou."

Huh?! You truly don't know…? Ha, is this the interference of "them?"

They always resort to such tactics. They are notorious for not sparing any means…

But did they really think this kind of psychological attack would work on me?

Hmph, those members of the "organization." They have engaged in various hindrances, such as garbling important emails sent by the editor (a true story), or sending photos of a man claiming to be "Yujiro" with a smile while cosplaying as Saiki (a true story), or even accidentally omitting "Eiwaz's" pages specifically during proofreading (a true story, and that was genuinely terrifying). It seems they were diligently involved in a wide range of interference, but did they seriously believe that such things could stop me? They are truly naive.

Fuhahaha, no one can stop me anymore! Remember this well. The only ones capable of stopping me in this world are the editors!

Hm… What's this? A suspicious presence…?

And the sound that has been echoing throughout my house since earlier, what could it possibly be…?

Could it be the "Eloquent Index Finger…?"

Huh, I see. It's Shueisha. They have come to retrieve their intellectual property.

Well, it's about time to feed the cat its "Forbidden Feast" anyway. There's no helping it…

I rise and gaze into the threshold between the mortal realm and the isolated world. However—

Th-This is…?! No way…!

I hastily unlock the door to the entrance, but there is only “nothingness” beyond.

Could it be… Could this be the “call from beyond…?!”

Who on earth is it…? The editor?… No, this must undoubtedly be the doing of “them.” How absurd. I haven’t even expressed my gratitude to Asou-sensei yet…

Very well then, I shall state it in this moment of transient time… First and foremost, to all the “living beings” who were involved in the production of this novel, I offer my thanks.

And kukuku… Asou-sensei…

I feel honored to have had the opportunity to write the novelization of this beloved work. Thank you so much for the wonderful illustrations amid your busy schedule!

Also, to all the Saiki fans and Asou-sensei fans who are currently reading this, I may have had various shortcomings, but if you were able to sense even a slight hint of new possibilities in the world of Saiki Kusuo that was expressed in a different medium, as the author of the novelization and as a Saiki fan myself, there is nothing that brings me greater joy.

Thank you truly for reading until the end. And thank you so, so much for accompanying me on this journey. I know that you’re reading this with a wry smile. I am not a psychic, though.

…Tch, it seems I spoke a bit too much with an “honest” tone. Eiwaz!

—Hinata Shou

Asou Shuuichi:

That's it for my first novelization! It was a valuable experience to have someone other than myself write Saiki Kusuo's story! Reading the completed manuscript, I have mixed feelings of joy and frustration seeing my character come to life and move around. This is the kind of story I wanted to draw in manga form! (laughs)

Hinata Shou:

Asou-sensei, do you have the "psychic ability" to come up with clever comments in an instant? You must have, right?

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